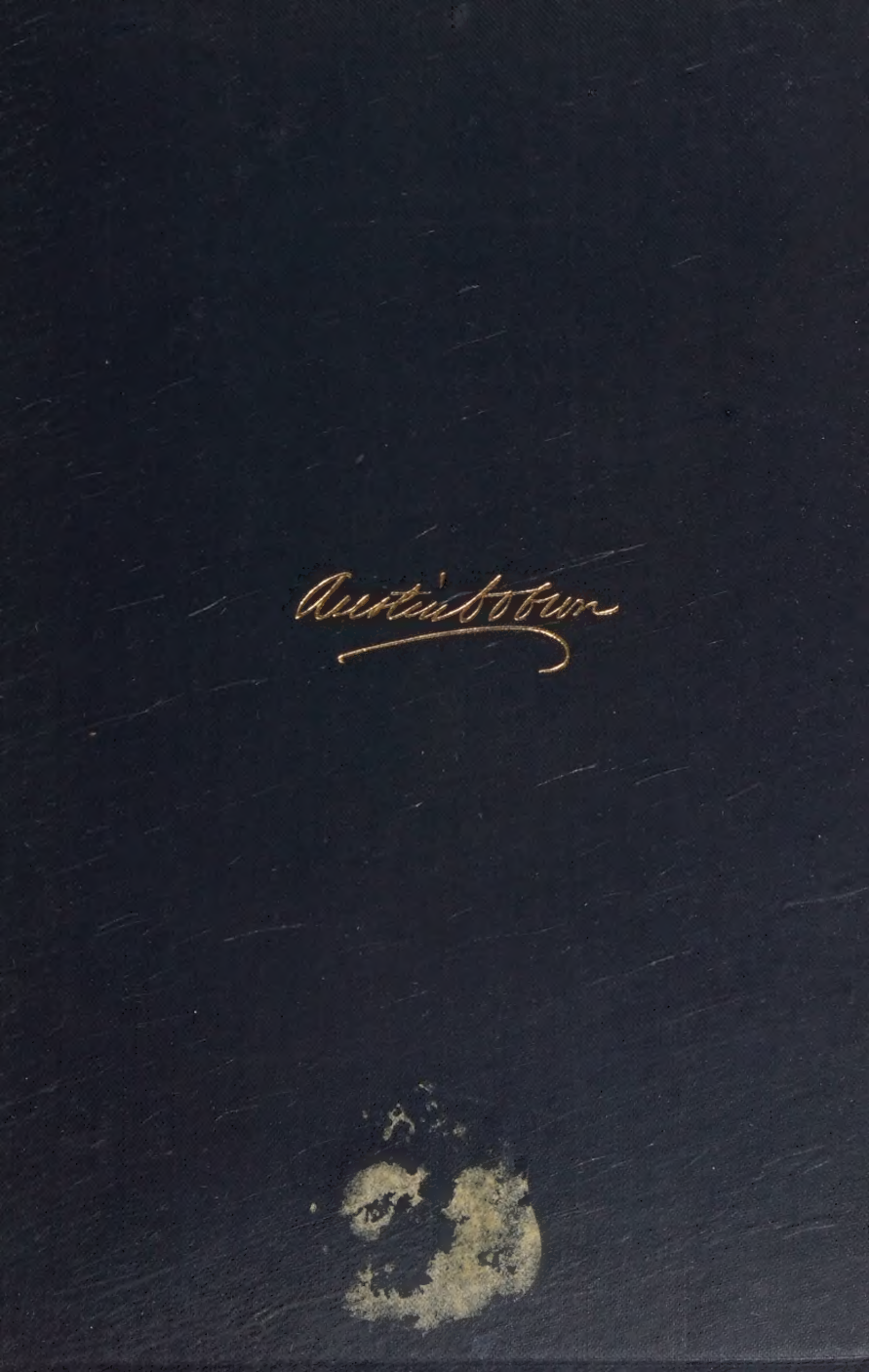

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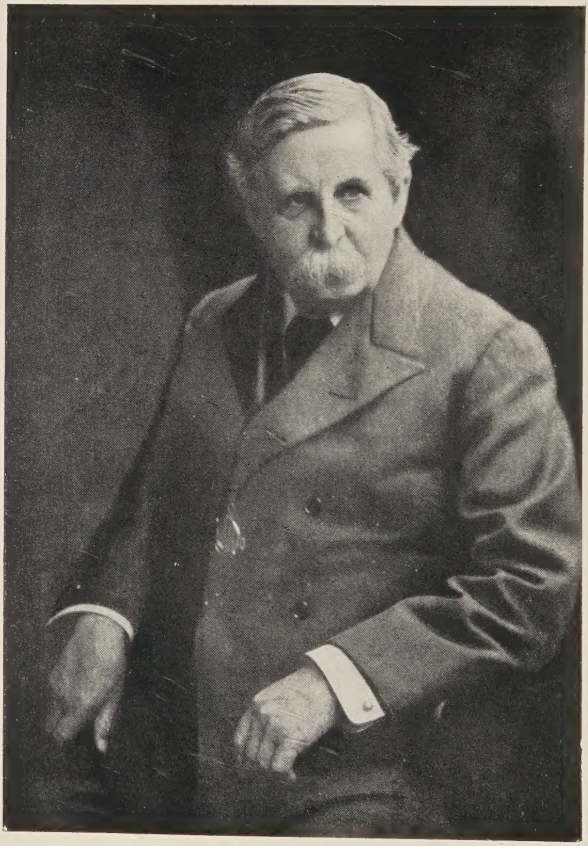
AUSTIN DOBSON

Some Notes by
ALBAN DOBSON



AUSTIN DOBSON AT 70

From a photograph by H. Walter Barnett

AUSTIN DOBSON

Some Notes by
ALBAN DOBSON

With Chapters by
SIR EDMUND GOSSE &
GEORGE SAINTSBURY

WITH
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MOST of the material that composes this little volume has already appeared in print, although some of it in a slightly different form.

My thanks are due to the Editor of the *Cornhill Magazine* for his courtesy in allowing me to reprint the matter which goes to form Chapters V and X inclusive; and to the Editor of the *London Mercury* for a similar courtesy as regards the contents of Chapter III.

Sir Edmund Gosse, whose advice and guidance were always freely at my disposal, was kind enough to allow me to include his article (Chapter II) on my father (not before reprinted) which originally appeared in *The Quarterly* for January 1922; he returned to me a corrected proof, with a letter in his own writing, dated 6 May 1928, the day succeeding the first of his two operations. I am also very grateful to Mr. George Saintsbury (and Messrs. Macmillan & Co.) for permitting the re-appearance in this volume of his *Little Necrology*, originally included in *A Scrap Book* (Macmillan & Co.), 1922.

I would express my indebtedness to the following for various kindnesses: To Mr. Humphrey Milford and the Oxford University Press for the use of the blocks of several of the illustrations, and also for permitting me to quote here and there poems of my father, of which the Press possesses the sole publishing rights; to Messrs. Macmillan & Messrs A. & C. Black for the use of the blocks of the illustrations facing p. 265 and p. 176 respectively; and to the First Edition Club (and its Director, Mr. A. J. A. Symons) for allowing me to reprint the preface contributed by Sir Edmund Gosse to the Bibliography of the writings of Austin Dobson compiled by myself for that club in 1925.

Then there are the writers of the letters appearing in Chapters V to IX inclusive. My thanks are due to those who in response to my request have freely given me permission to quote letters written either by themselves or by those whom they represent. Many of the writers, however, have passed away, and it has been impossible to trace any source to which application for the necessary permission could be made. In such cases I hope that I may escape the charge of having

printed anything to which the writers or their representatives, whoever they may be, could take exception. At this point I may add that, to avoid frequent explanation and reduplication, I have referred to all the writers of letters and other of my father's friends by their latest titles, quite regardless whether they bore those titles at the date they are mentioned.

Lastly I would thank my wife, without whose help and appreciation this volume would never have seen the light of day.

ALBAN DOBSON

EALING
1928

I

INTRODUCTORY AND BIOGRAPHICAL

IN a memorandum addressed by Austin Dobson to his wife and his executors, he intimated that he was distinctly opposed to any form of Memoir. What prompted him to leave behind such an injunction, is to some extent a matter for conjecture. It is possible that having been responsible for so many biographies himself, he was well aware of the pitfalls that beset every writer who starts stirring up the past.

When at his bedside only a few weeks before he died, I can vividly remember his recalling with unhesitating accuracy some poems, written as long ago as 1865 or thereabouts, which had appeared in a contemporary magazine, and his anxiety lest any of these earlier pieces should be brought to light through the misguided enthusiasm of his executors and others. I am inclined however to think that the true reason for his desiring to remain 'unsung' was due merely to his excessive modesty, because my father was always prepared to sink into oblivion, and the lines that appear on the last page of his *Complete Poetical Works*

represent a perfectly genuine expression of his feelings.

> In after days, when grasses high
> O'ertop the stone where I shall lie,
> Though ill or well the world adjust
> My slender claim to honoured dust,
> I shall not question or reply.
>
> I shall not see the morning sky;
> I shall not hear the night-wind sigh;
> I shall be mute, as all men must
> In after days!
>
> But yet, now living, fain were I
> That some one then should testify,
> Saying, —'He held his pen in trust
> To Art, not serving shame or lust.'
> Will none? Then let my memory die
> In after days!

Whatever the reason, however, the injunction remains, and I have no desire to deviate from the poet's expressed wishes. At the same time one cannot overlook the following facts. On the one hand through the generosity of the Oxford University Press in acquiring the publishing rights, the whole of Austin Dobson's Poetical Works has been produced in one volume in the Oxford Poets Series. All his volumes of Essays have also been published by the same firm, and they will all ultimately be available in the uniform

World's Classics Series, in which series nine volumes have already appeared. His biographies, most of which no doubt would require some little revision, remain in the hands of different publishers. But the frequent requests that reach me for bibliographical information and the fact that all his Essays and Poems are with one publisher seem to warrant a small companion volume, containing at all events the salient facts of his life.

On the other hand, if the Author's expressed wishes were interpreted literally and his family were to refrain from compiling such a volume, there is nothing to prevent any one else from writing a Life or a Memoir of some kind, and in such an event it would be a little difficult to withhold such information as might be required by the biographer. Or, should no volume appear reasonably soon, it is conceivable that a demand for a Life will ultimately arise, if only for the completion of some existing biographical series. It would then be necessary for the work to be done by some biographer who might never have met the subject of his biography, and might have to rely on obtaining second-hand information from those who had, or even from those who had not.

In the light of these considerations, an attempt has been made in the following pages to bring

together within the compass of a small volume the essential facts regarding my father's life and his works. I confine myself to facts and facts only, because a criticism of his work may be safely left to his many friends whose ready assistance and consents have made the preparation of this volume possible. This little venture is not intended as a Memoir, in any sense of the word, but it may nevertheless serve as a slight record of the man and his work, designed for the benefit of succeeding generations.

. . . . . .

Henry Austin Dobson—to give him his full name—was born at Plymouth on 18 January 1840, and was the eldest son of George Clarisse Dobson. He came of a family of civil engineers, both his father and his grandfather having followed that profession. The latter had, towards the end of the eighteenth century, settled in France, and married a French lady, and it was from his grandmother, therefore, that Austin Dobson inherited his love of France, and, in particular, of the old French verse-forms which he afterwards so largely, and, it is generally considered, so successfully adopted.

At the time of Austin Dobson's birth, his father, who had made his home in England and married

Miss Augusta Harris, was engaged on work in connexion with the breakwater at Plymouth, but when Austin was eight or nine the family moved to Holyhead where Mr. George Dobson had been appointed resident engineer in charge of the construction of the breakwater. Austin's education, begun at Beaumaris Grammar School, was continued at Coventry, where the late Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher was, for a time, one of his school-fellows. It was finally completed at Strasbourg, then, as now again, a part of France. It was only on rare occasions that my father could be persuaded to recall even isolated events in those very early school-days. That they were not uneventful may be gathered from the account of his adventures which he published under the title of *Bob Trevor and I* in *Beeton's Annual* in the year 1866 (*see* Appendix II).

Austin Dobson, like his grandfather and his father, was intended to follow the calling of a civil engineer, and there was some prospect of his entering the works of the Armstrong Company, of which his cousin Stuart Rendel, afterwards Lord Rendel, ultimately became vice-chairman. At the age of sixteen, however, he obtained a nomination which enabled him to enter the Civil Service, as a clerk in the Board of Trade, where he

rose to the rank of Principal, retiring after nearly forty-five years' service in 1901.

Few men could have been blessed with more delightful colleagues to relieve the tedium that from time to time invades every Government Department, and it was the presence of Austin Dobson, Cosmo Monkhouse and Sir Edmund Gosse in one office that prompted an American contemporary to refer to that Department as 'A Nest of Singing Birds'. But it was not only the presence of genial companions that made life pleasant, but the fact that some of those companions were in their spare time engaged in the same pursuits and interests as himself.

There is evidence that Austin Dobson conceived the idea of becoming a painter. He certainly attended for a time evening schools at South Kensington, and the drawings and sketch-books that survive from those early days reveal considerable talent. In the early sixties, however, he seems to have turned his thoughts seriously towards poetry, and in 1864 his first poem to be printed appeared in *Temple Bar* under the title of 'A City Flower', to be followed shortly afterwards by 'The Sundial' in the same magazine. His next attempt was a contribution of seven poems to the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, at intervals

during 1865 and 1866, but he thought it advisable to reprint only two of these when his poems came to be collected into book form. From 1868 onward he became a frequent contributor to several magazines, but particularly to *St. Pauls*, which had recently been launched by Anthony Trollope. Mr. Michael Sadleir, in his recent Memoir of Trollope, states that my father's contributions to *St. Pauls* were, apart from Anthony Trollope's own contributions, the only items in that magazine likely to survive. Among the poems appearing from 1868 onwards may be mentioned 'Une Marquise', 'A Dead Letter', 'The Dying of Tanneguy du Bois', the 'Angiola' Songs, 'A Gentleman (and a Gentlewoman) of the Old School', 'Before Sedan', 'Tu Quoque', 'The Story of Rosina', 'An Autumn Idyll', 'The Idyll of the Carp', 'The Prayer of the Swine to Circe', 'Goodnight, Babette!' 'A Dialogue from Plato', 'Cupid's Alley', 'The Ballad of Beau Brocade', 'A Ballad of Queen Elizabeth', 'Molly Trefusis', and 'The Ladies of St. James's', not to mention a considerable number of poems (including the 'Prodigals', which is believed to have been the first Ballade in the English language) in the old French forms in which the poet delighted. On these, and other poems too numerous to cite, may be said to rest,

to a large extent, Austin Dobson's reputation as a 'brilliant lyrical poet', to use the phrase with which a hundred of his friends greeted him on his seventieth birthday in 1910.

At this point it may be interesting to observe that my father contributed to the *Saturday Journal* during 1874 and the early part of 1875, as well as to *Evening Hours*, a number of poems bearing the signature 'Walter Bryce'. Indeed in one issue of the *Saturday Journal*, there was a poem over the signature 'Austin Dobson' and another over that of 'Walter Bryce'. None of the 'Walter Bryce' poems, with the sole exception of 'In the Belfry', was ever reprinted, and the use of this name was entirely unknown to Francis E. Murray, whose exhaustive *Austin Dobson Bibliography* appeared in 1901. The poems shown in that Bibliography as appearing in the *Saturday Journal* are for the most part unsigned poems, of which the authorship is only apparent from the contents page to the magazine.

In 1873, the poet's verses were for the first time collected into a volume, dedicated to Anthony Trollope, and entitled *Vignettes in Rhyme*; while in 1877, a second volume, dedicated to Frederick Locker, and entitled *Proverbs in Porcelain*, was

'UNE MARQUISE'

From a drawing by Hugh Thomson

published. In 1883 appeared a third volume, *Old-World Idylls*, comprising most of the poems in the two earlier volumes, and two years later it was followed by *At the Sign of the Lyre*; later editions of these volumes which ran into many editions, were provided with extra titles for binding up as *Poems on Several Occasions*. The last two volumes were companion volumes appearing in the 'Parchment Library' of Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., and I observe that Mr. E. V. Lucas has expressed the opinion that they were among the most beautiful books ever published.

Meanwhile many of the poems contained in the foregoing volumes had appeared in America in two volumes entitled *Vignettes in Rhyme* (1880) and *At the Sign of the Lyre* (1885), the contents of which differed from their English counterparts.

Between 1892 and 1895, three volumes appeared illustrated, two of them (*The Ballad of Beau Brocade* and *The Story of Rosina*) by Hugh Thomson and the third (*Proverbs in Porcelain*) by Bernard Partridge, but the poems included in them had all appeared in one or other of the earlier volumes.

In 1895, there was published in America and England a two volume edition entitled *Poems on*

Several Occasions, containing a good many more poems than the earlier work with that title referred to above. This was really the first attempt at a collected edition. William Strang supplied an etched portrait, and there were a number of illustrations by the French etcher A. Lalauze.

In 1897, however, the first collected edition proper appeared under the title of *Collected Poems*, and in this volume were included all the poems up to that date which Austin Dobson considered worthy of reprinting in permanent form. A number of editions appeared in subsequent years, to some of which considerable additions were made, with the result that the ninth edition (third impression) which was published in 1920 contains a very large number of poems not in the first edition of 1897.

It has not infrequently been observed that Austin Dobson's main flow of poetry ceased after about the year 1885. Judging from the great mass of poems composed before that date, by which he will, perhaps, be best remembered by posterity, this is substantially true. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the many poems belonging to the period 1885–1921, written latterly only at rare intervals, and often for some charitable object, which are to be found in the later sections of his *Complete*

Poetical Works. After 1900 there was almost a reluctance on the poet's part to produce in print anything poetical, but this was solely due to his anxiety not to publish anything that was not in his opinion or might not be, in the opinion of others, up to his earlier standard. A number of poems were written, even in his declining years, which never appeared in print.

So much for his poetry. Austin Dobson's prose work must be divided under two heads, Biographies and Essays. His first prose works appeared in the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* in 1866, and were short studies of four Frenchwomen, Mlle de Corday, MadameRoland, the Princesse de Lamballe, and Madame de Genlis. Although *Four Frenchwomen*, under which title these papers were published in 1890 in volume form may be regarded as one of the writer's happiest efforts, practically no further prose of this kind was attempted until 1882, if we omit one paper appearing in 1872 which was never reprinted. In 1874, however, the first original prose work in book form appeared under the title of *A Handbook of English Literature.*

From 1882 onwards Austin Dobson devoted himself to those eighteenth-century studies which were subsequently to fill no less than eleven

volumes of Essays. As already indicated *Four Frenchwomen* appeared in 1890; this was followed by *Eighteenth Century Vignettes* in three series, appearing in 1892, 1894 and 1896 respectively, by *A Paladin of Philanthropy* in 1899, *Side Walk Studies* in 1902, *De Libris* in 1908, *Old Kensington Palace* in 1910, *At Prior Park* in 1912, *Rosalba's Journal* in 1915, and *Later Essays* in 1921.

But I must not forget to mention that literary miscellany *A Bookman's Budget* (1917), if only for the reason that Mr. George Saintsbury confessed that it was one of the incentives to his delightful series of *Scrap Books.*

His Biographies extend over the period 1879 to 1903, and comprise the following: William Hogarth (1879, finally revised in 1907), Henry Fielding (1883, finally revised in 1907), Thomas Bewick (1884), Richard Steele (1886), Oliver Goldsmith (1888), Horace Walpole (1890), Samuel Richardson (1902), and Fanny Burney (1903). Although no doubt most of these Biographies might reasonably be capable of revision, it is of interest to note that a reprint of the Henry Fielding appeared as recently as 1926, and one of Horace Walpole, with additional notes and revisions by Dr. Paget Toynbee, in 1927.

This list does not by any means exhaust Austin

Dobson's literary output, but space would hardly permit of even an abridged catalogue of the many books which he edited or for which he supplied introductions or prefaces. One small work may be mentioned which does not find a place among any of the categories described above. In 1866 there appeared *The Authentic History of Captain Castagnette, nephew of the 'Man with the Wooden Head'. From the French of Manuel. Illustrated with forty-three pictures by Gustave Doré.* The book, which appeared in pictorial boards and is consequently difficult to find now, bears a dedication to A.D. and G.C.D. by the translator. The work was reprinted in a more permanent form in 1892, by Francis E. Murray, who as Austin Dobson's bibliographer, was naturally interested in a book of which Austin Dobson happened to be the translator. The initials in the dedication are those of his mother and his father.

Austin Dobson retired from the Board of Trade in 1901. The twenty years that followed were devoted to his eighteenth-century researches, although the literary output that resulted was hardly so relatively voluminous as that in the preceding period. This was due to two reasons. In the first place failing eyesight—he became ultimately almost completely blind in one eye—

proved a great handicap to one to whom constant reference and verification was an essential condition precedent to the production of any finished work. Secondly, in his declining years, he became subject to severe rheumatoid arthritis in the right leg, a malady which confined him very largely to the house. He endured his disability however with extraordinary patience, and happily was able to continue his writing up to the end, his last volume appearing within a few months of his death.

He was laid aside for some time in the early months of 1921, but showed signs of recovery as the summer approached. Towards the end of June, however, he had a heart attack from which he never really recovered, and after a lingering illness, lasting throughout the intensely hot summer of that year, he passed peacefully away on the morning of 2 September, 1921. He lies buried in the Westminster Cemetery, Hanwell, and upon the plain Portland stone slab that covers his grave stands, surmounted by a sundial, one of the balusters from the parapet of old Kew Bridge, which was for many years to be seen in a favourite corner of his garden at Ealing.

Austin Dobson became, in 1891, a member of the Athenaeum Club, under the rule which permits the election each year, by the Committee, of

A CORNER OF AUSTIN DOBSON'S GARDEN AT EALING

MRS. AUSTIN DOBSON

a limited number of persons of distinguished eminence in science, literature, the arts or for public service. In 1912 he was elected an honorary member of the Author's Club of New York, a distinction at that date only enjoyed by three other Englishmen—Thomas Hardy, Lord Morley, and Lord Bryce.

He was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and in 1901 received the honorary degree of LL.D. of Edinburgh University. For many years he served on the Committees of the London Library, the Royal Literary Fund, and the Incorporated Society of Authors.

In 1868 he married Frances Mary, eldest daughter of Nathaniel Beardmore (a distinguished Civil Engineer and past President of the Meteorological Society), herself a facile writer of children's stories in those early days. He had a family of five sons and five daughters, all of whom survived him, although his eldest daughter Augusta Mary Rachel Dobson (Mus. Bac. London), died on 23 August 1923, and is buried beside him, his second son Austin Arthur Greaves Dobson (A. M. Inst. C.E.) died in Sydney, Australia, on 23 May 1926, and his widow passed away, after lingering between life and death for three years, at Ealing on 11 October 1927.

II

AN APPRECIATION

By

Sir Edmund Gosse [1]

NO writer of equal distinction can ever have exceeded Austin Dobson in the absence of any kind of saliency in the personal details of his life. There was absolutely nothing in his career of over eighty years upon which biography can seize, no glimmer of adventure or faintest tincture of romance. When it has been said that he was born, in 1840, into a professional family; that, after a brief education in England and at Strasbourg, he entered the Board of Trade at the age of sixteen; and that he remained there,

> Calme et paisible,
> Comme un poteau
> Inamovible,
> Dans son bureau,

till he retired from it at the age of sixty, there is nothing exterior that can be added. His married existence, which was untroubled by a single bereavement, enjoyed the same happy uniformity. He did not travel; he made no public appearances;

[1] See reference on p. ix.

he found no pleasure in political or social distractions. Every weekday morning he proceeded to his office, and every afternoon he returned to his suburban home; on Sundays he went to church. Ealing possessed no citizen more regular in his habits or more blameless in his conduct.

He preserved this noiseless regularity, this resignation to what seemed an excess of bourgeois conventionality, partly in obedience to temperament, partly because it enabled him to devote himself, with no disturbing element, to the workings of his imagination. We should make the gravest of mistakes if we supposed this outward quietude to respond to an inward insensibility. Austin Dobson, so hushed and unexhilarating as his exterior envelope appeared, lived a life of ceaseless mental activity. His intellectual interests absorbed him, and he cultivated a curious power of resuming them, day after day, without any disturbance from domestic or official duties. These he accepted in their proper season, and then passed out of them into what was for him the only real existence, the domain of literature and art. The task of appraising him, therefore, although difficult because it demands observation of secret phenomena, is so far simplified that it has to deal exclusively with mental processes. The critic has

to penetrate, as well as he can, the poet's art and the historian's method. He is not distracted by any extraneous circumstance, as is the case in the biographies of most eminent men of letters. The development of Dobson's imagination, and the course it took, are our sole solicitude in contemplating his career.

He had no tradition of literature behind him and no acquaintance with literary people when he entered the Board of Trade, nor did it, I believe, occur to him to write until long afterwards. He was slow in mental development and without confidence in his own powers. For a long time he saw no path before him. But he felt an impetus towards aesthetic expression, and having some facility in drawing, he took to spending his evenings in an art-school at South Kensington. A few of his productions exist, and show a humoristic tendency, in the direction of Cruikshank and Charles Keene. He was, however, brought into contact with a clerk of his own age at the Board of Trade, William Cosmo Monkhouse, afterwards distinguished as an art-critic. Monkhouse, who was much more precocious than Dobson, had been writing verses for years past, and had already some experience of printer's ink. After Monkhouse's death, in 1901, Dobson recalled that his

old companion, in those twilight days of their boyhood, 'had the happy faculty of conveying a well-considered and weighty opinion without suggesting superiority or patronage'. The words, very characteristic of Dobson, reveal the relation which long existed between the friends, and which gradually led to an attempt on the part of the elder to enter the lists where his friend seemed already so brilliant. But, for a long while, Dobson was content to read and to admire. He was in his twenty-fifth year when he began to compete in verse with his sole literary associate. He composed the verses called 'A City Flower', which he sent to *Temple Bar* in 1865, and presently he had the ecstatic pleasure of seeing them in print. This poem, after long hesitation, Dobson reprinted thirty-two years later, and it has figured in his works ever since. It is a sentimental picture of a girl in a milliner's shop, a graceful and merry composition in the fashion of that day, without any particular characteristic of Austin Dobson's mature style.

But he was now started on his road, and during the next three years he wrote with increasing confidence. A periodical, which has long passed away, *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, lay open to Monkhouse, and he introduced his friend to the editor. A series of poems by Austin

Dobson was published here in 1865 and 1866, among them some that we know. Many others have never been reprinted; and it was the author's wish, strenuously repeated shortly before his death, that they should remain unknown. He had a horror of the 'conscientious' editor of 'complete' posthumous works, who sacrifices the reputation of his victim to a passion for bibliography. But several of these early pieces were retrieved by the author himself; and we turn to 'The Sundial', to 'A Revolutionary Relic', and in particular to 'Incognita', with its steady advance in metrical skill, as evidence of the line which Austin Dobson took in starting. Sixty years ago a species of light verse was much in fashion; it was approved of by Mid-Victorian taste, and was exploited with remarkable neatness by Frederick Locker. There were elements in it of Tennyson, of Thackeray, and of Praed. It was rather irritatingly called *vers de société*, in a French of Stratford-atte-Bowe unknown to Paris. It was expected to be scrupulously 'nice'. In this category was included all verse of an easy and debonair character, from which gravity and passion were carefully excluded, but in which an easy note of superficial pathos, and above all of sentiment, was preserved. A better name for it than the silly phrase *vers de société* is

'occasional verse', which comes near to the *Gelegenheitsdichtung* that Goethe defended.

In the youth of Austin Dobson, by far the most skilful proficient in this airy and accidental class of writing was Frederick Locker, whose volume of *London Lyrics*, originally published in 1857, had grown to be a sort of standard of perfection. We may recall Locker's own statement with regard to his aim as a poet:

> Occasional verse should be short, graceful, refined, and fanciful, not seldom distinguished by chastened sentiment and often playful. The tone should not be pitched high; it should be terse and idiomatic, and rather in the conversational key; the rhythm should be crisp and sparkling, and the rhyme frequent and never forced, while the entire poem should be marked by tasteful moderation, high finish, and completeness.

These words express, with remarkable accuracy, the purpose which Austin Dobson put before him in starting on his poetical career. He desired to excel in the little field cultivated so richly by Prior in the eighteenth and by Praed in the nineteenth century; and it is important to observe that in his early experiments he made no attempt to extend the borders of this domain, but merely to extract from it the most refined and delicate results of which it was capable. Hence Dobson's earliest advances did not take the shape

of any revolt against the sentimental verse of which the latest exponents had been Thackeray and Locker, but of a strenuous self-education in the direct art of expression. It is needful that this should be stated, because in later years, as I shall endeavour to explain, his ambition entirely changed. He used, indeed, to deplore, with as near an approach to bitterness as his sweet nature was capable of, that the critics persisted in seeing in him nothing but a writer of *vers de société*. It is true that this injustice long pursued his maturer art, but it is not less true that in his original character he was not to be distinguished from those purveyors of 'light' verse who are hardly admitted into the kingdom of Apollo.

In Dobson's twenty-ninth year, in March 1868, Anthony Trollope published in his new periodical, *St. Pauls Magazine*, a poem which marks a sudden advance in the poet's career, and constitutes the earliest exhibition of his individual character as a writer. This was 'Une Marquise'; and to read

> As you sit there growing prouder,
> And your ringed hands glance and go,
> And your fan's *frou-frou* sounds louder,
> And your *beaux yeux* flash and glow'—
> Ah! you used them on the Painter,
> As you know,

For the Sieur Larose spoke fainter,
Bowing low,
Thanked Madame and Heaven for mercy
That each sitter was not Circe,
Or at least he told you so?
Growing proud, I say, and prouder
To the crowd that come and go,
Dainty Deity of Powder,
Fickle Queen of Fop and Beau—

with the rich colour of its images and speed of movement, and with the bell-like recurrence of its rhymes, is to realize that a new mastery of art had arisen out of the thin grace of *vers de société*. This dates the opening of Austin Dobson's first mature period, and 'Une Marquise' was quickly followed by 'Avice', that little masterpiece of winged lightness which sacrificed nothing to poverty of sentiment; by 'A Dead Letter', in which the narrative form borders for the first time on the dramatic; and by 'The Sick Man and the Birds', in which the dramatic is successfully achieved. All these pieces belong to 1868 and 1869; and it is pleasant to record that the interest taken in them by Anthony Trollope, and the care he took in meticulous revision and criticism of them, found a delighted and grateful response in Austin Dobson's modest conscientiousness.

At this point an odd incident has to be recorded,

since it raised a violent storm in the porcelain tea-cup of the poet's susceptibility. Hitherto the poems which he had published in periodicals—and they had now become rather numerous—had been uniformly signed with the initials 'A. D.' The full name had never yet appeared in print. In 1869 he wrote, and in February 1870 he published, in *St. Pauls Magazine* the poem now well known under the title of 'The Drama of the Doctor's Window', which has always been, and still is, a universal favourite with his readers. Dobson had formed the acquaintance of a young lawyer, Richard Webster, who was nearly three years his junior, and who, as Lord Alverstone, was destined to reach the highest position in the legal profession. In 1870 Webster had not long been called to the Bar, but was beginning to be known. In September of the following year, Webster asked Austin Dobson, in an offhand way, whether he had *seen* a poem called 'The Drama of the Doctor's Window', to which Dobson answered, 'Yes—I wrote it!' Two days later, Webster sent a letter to Dobson, in which he said, 'an intimate friend of mine tells me she wrote, and has shown me a MS. of "The Drama of the Doctor's Window", adding further particulars'. Only those who recollect the temperament of the

poet will be able to conceive the tempest of agitation which swept over him at this aggression; the charge did indeed become somewhat serious when, in spite of all statements to the contrary, the lady persisted in claiming, not merely 'The Drama of the Doctor's Window', but all the other poems signed 'A. D.', although these were not her initials. Austin Dobson was put to the inconvenience of collecting evidence of his handwriting and of the recollection of common acquaintances, even of printers and press-correctors; and still—and this is perhaps the most amazing fact in the whole imbroglio—Webster could not be induced to withdraw his support of the lady, who died not long afterwards, firmly impenitent. All that Webster would ever concede was, after a delay of ten months, an acknowledgement that he had failed to prove a claim, which, however, he still favoured.

The painful little incident belongs to literary history because the distracted poet, who saw in it far more than its intrinsic importance, recorded the whole story in a pamphlet, now of excessive rarity, which he issued in 1872. This is the earliest of his voluminous writings in book-form, and here for the first time his name was printed in full. The brochure possesses particular value from the fact that, in his almost feverish determination

to prove his right to the invention and conduct of the poem, he prints in it, besides several fragments, a complete first draft of what he originally called 'A Story of Pyramus and Thisbe', diverging in many places from the finished text. The little story, which has elements of mild mystery, may be completed by saying that Dobson and Webster had no further communication till they met accidentally in Edinburgh thirty years later, when Lord Alverstone greeted the poet civilly, but made no reference to the old charge of plagiarism.

A second period in the development of Austin Dobson was marked by his discovery in 1870 of the poets who were called pre-Raphaelite. It is characteristic of his cloistered habit of mind that the advent of Swinburne had left him almost untouched, while against *Poems and Ballads* of 1866 he had felt a gentle but distinct repulsion. The publication of Rossetti's *Poems*, on the other hand, deeply interested him; and he was thrown back upon a book which he now read for the first time, William Morris's *Defence of Guenevere*. The result was to incite Dobson not exactly to a following of Morris, but to a treatment of romantic subjects in a manner wholly serious, and with a new refinement of language. The pieces which belong to this second period are dispersed through Dobson's

collected editions, and their peculiar character has, I think, never been perceived. It is therefore worth while to consider them together, and to recognize a section of his poetical baggage which has been unduly ignored. The principal examples —all, I believe, composed in 1870 and 1871— are the 'Angiola' songs; 'André le Chapelain'; the elegy beginning:

> Him best in all the dim Arthuriad,
> Of lovers of fair women, him I prize,—
> The Pagan Palomydes,

'The Virgin with the Bells'; and above all, 'The Dying of Tanneguy du Bois,' with its haunting refrain:

> Ah! I had hoped, God wot,—had longed that she
> Should watch me from the little-lit tourelle,
> Me, coming riding by the windy lea—
> Me, coming back again to her, Giselle;
> Yea, I had hoped once more to hear him call,
> The curly-pate, who, rushen lance in rest,
> Stormed at the lilies by the orchard wall;—
> *There is no bird in any last year's nest.*

Something of the same element is found in the slightly later 'Death of Procris' and the elaborate Spenserian study, 'The Prayer of the Swine to Circe'. These poems mark a phase in the evolution of Austin Dobson's talent, a phase which was soon, and perhaps happily, abandoned. It was not

encouraged by those whose judgement, in those early days, he respected, partly no doubt because they had grown to expect another class of poetry from him, but partly because what excited admiration of the pre-Raphaelites was an audacity, a fire, which Dobson had no wish to display. But his experiments in this direction, especially if extracted and put side by side, are interesting; and, now that the splendour and flame of the protagonists have subsided, perhaps there is more of the real pathetic romance of the *Morte d'Arthur* about 'The Dying of Tanneguy du Bois' than about the daring pastiche of Rossetti and Swinburne. However this may be, there can be no question that Dobson's brief excursion into pre-Raphaelitism was highly beneficial to his style. It freed him from *vers de société*. It taught him the value of combining richness with simplicity, and the necessity of rejecting mere conventional verbiage. He marked his abandonment of it by a quaint burlesque, 'The Peacock on the Wall'[1].

He returned, with vigour refreshed, to his earlier manner, in which seriousness was invariably relieved by a smile or by a touch of gentle

[1] Approved in *Vignettes in Rhyme* (Three Editions). Never reprinted.

human indulgence. Some of the poems of this period will always be favourites with his readers. They include 'A Gentleman of the Old School' and 'A Gentlewoman of the Old School', where the rivalry with Praed is patent, but where the challenge is as successful as it is deliberate:

> Patience or Prudence,—what you will,
> Some prefix faintly fragrant still
> As those old musky scents that fill
> Our grandams' pillows;
> And for her youthful portrait take
> Some long-waist child of Hudson's make,
> Stiffly at ease beside a lake
> With swans and willows.

Here also is 'The Story of Rosina', a poem of unusual length for Austin Dobson, founded on an incident in the life of the painter, François Boucher:

> The scene, a wood. A shepherd, tip-toe creeping,
> Carries a basket, whence a billet peeps,
> To lay beside a silk-clad Oread sleeping
> Under an urn; yet not so sound she sleeps
> But that she plainly sees his graceful act;
> 'He thinks she thinks he thinks she sleeps,' in fact.

The references here to Hudson, in 'A Gentleman of the Old School' to Reynolds, in 'Rosina' to the famous 'Panier Mystérieux'—references not forced upon the reader, but realized by those who

look carefully under the surface of the text—mark the development of an element in Austin Dobson's work which was henceforth to be dominant above all others, namely, his acute sympathy with the art and life and literature of England and France in the eighteenth century.

All this time, his name was unknown and his initials observed by only a handful of readers. But in 1873, being in his thirty-fifth year, he ventured on a wider appeal. He published his first book, *Vignettes in Rhyme*, dedicated to Anthony Trollope. The collection was preceded by a little epigram which was presently dropped and has never, I think, been revived.[1] It is too graceful to be lost, and I venture to reprint it here:

Go, little Book, on this thy first emprise;
  If that thou 'scape the critic Ogre-land,
And come to where young Beauty, with bright eyes,
  Listless at noon, shall take thee in her hand,
Tell her that nought in thy poor Master stirs
Of art, or grace or song—that is not hers.

The volume, in fact, was laid at the feet of the Maiden of the Period, as we saw her in the annual show of the Royal Academy, or as she stepped, 'shod with neat balmorals, on the seaweeds and

[1] It is now included in the *Complete Poetical Works*, p. 54.

the corals' through the pages of *Punch*. This element in the verse of Austin Dobson was never again to be so prominent as it was in *Vignettes in Rhyme*, but it was always to exist, and it is useless to attempt to ignore it. He did not wish to ignore it. He said, late in his career, when the reaction against Tennyson was beginning to be rampant, that he himself was a Victorian, and proud of being one. He was many other things, but he was the Laureate of the Nice Young Girl, tall, fair, and serious, in white muslin and innocently anticipating the Eligible Young Man. In less than fifty years we have passed so completely out of the Mid-Victorian atmosphere, into an interest in the picturesqueness of horror and squalor, and into violent topsy-turvy ideals of morality, that the innocent world of fancy, as it flourished in 1873, has become almost inconceivable to young persons of vigorous mental ambition. It was a rose-coloured world, suffused with a transparent radiance of ideality, and founded, no doubt, more on an illusion as to what things should be than on observation of what they were. But in the incessant oscillation of taste from one excess to the other, there is probably but seldom a close relation to that primal truth, that realism, that reality, which is always the *fata morgana* of every genuine artist. May we not admit

that, if Austin Dobson's girlish heroines, with

> still the sweet half-solemn look
> Where some past thought is clinging,
> As when one shuts a serious book
> To hear the thrushes singing,

imperfectly interpret the emancipated womanhood of to-day, the horrors of *Le Feu* and *The Red Laughter* exploit life from the opposite side with equal inexactitude? Andreyev, in one of his dreadful books, says, 'I have seen many men, and all I saw bore the stamp of stupidity and madness'. It is no more 'realistic' to paint all men and women as types of the abysmal brute than to present them all as athletic angels. The pendulum of taste swings to and fro, and it is only Shakespeare and Jane Austen who remain permanently in favour.

Austin Dobson was not unconscious that his temptation lay on the side of the angels. He felt that he must always retain that bias, but he determined to counteract its ill effects by a more and more intense pre-occupation with perfection of form. There are pieces in *Vignettes in Rhyme* which do not from a technical point of view coincide with the writer's highest standard. Few poets have printed so few incorrect lines as Austin Dobson, but there are some bad verses in his first book, particularly in 'An Autumn Idyll'. He felt

his tendency to sentimentality, and was conscious of the danger of a style which coquetted in a spirit of levity with the tender passion. In order to preserve, what so many of his contemporaries missed, dignity in lightness and good manners in frivolity, he realized that he must preserve an impeccable correctness of form. He must write as Watteau painted, in the tenderest hues of rose-colour and grey.

At this juncture I must ask pardon if I introduce a personal recollection. It was shortly after the publication of *Vignettes in Rhyme* that I made Austin Dobson's acquaintance in circumstances which had some importance, perhaps, for us both. The late Radical politician, Mr. Peter Taylor, for many years M.P. for Leicester, lived in a large house surrounded by gardens on Campden Hill—Aubrey House, long ago destroyed. Here he and his gifted wife entertained on a considerable scale, and hither came many persons of romantic and exotic interest. Mazzini was among those who had haunted Aubrey House at an earlier time. Dobson was a correspondent of a Pen and Pencil Club inaugurated by Mrs. Peter Taylor, whose members met on stated occasions to read and exhibit to one another prose and verse, and drawings also, illustrating a theme suggested for each occasion

by the amiable hostess. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor liked to encourage ingenuous youth, and I had the honour of being elected to the Pen and Pencil Club. I attended the meeting in April 1874, when I was gratified by seeing and hearing several persons more or less notorious in their day. I knew no one in the room, nor was the quality of the successive contributions of a very exciting character. But in due course a slim young man, with dark eyes beneath a fine Horatian forehead, rose and read a short piece, in a voice attractive in its modesty and distinction. This, a whisper told me, was Mr. Austin Dobson, whose *Vignettes in Rhyme* had recently attracted a good deal of attention and were believed to have been rewarded by an Olympian nod from the Laureate. As it happily chanced, I had just read that volume, with juvenile enthusiasm. But what greatly moved me was that I recognized (I alone, no doubt!) that the piece just read was a rondeau in the French form elaborately defined by Théodore de Banville in the 1874 reprint of his *Petit Traité de la Poésie Française*, a book which—as we ultimately discovered—was exercising a remarkable influence over several young English poets. The company presently dispersed, and I shyly ventured to address the author of the rondeau with the remark that I noticed he

had kept to the rules of De Banville. He was extremely surprised, and I may dare to say extremely pleased. We wandered out into the night together, and, late as it was, we paced the streets in a kind of dream for hours, absorbed in our metrical discussions. As Dobson wrote twenty years later in what is one of the most perfect of his lyrics,[1] already on that first evening,

Much they talked of Measures, and more they talked of Style,
Of Form and 'lucid Order', of 'labour of the File'.

The association formed that night, and preserved unbroken for nearly eight and forty years, was so precious to me that I must dwell upon it a little longer. We met, of course, when we could; but in the very next year an accident threw us together in a wholly unanticipated way. I was appointed to the Board of Trade, and on my arrival who should be the first to welcome me but the poet of the rondeau? From this time forth, until Austin Dobson retired from the public service in 1901, he and I met practically on every weekday in the year when we were neither of us taking a holiday. I suppose it would be difficult to point to another literary association in the history of poetry more persistent or more unruffled. My only excuse, however, for mentioning it here

[1] '*Sat est scripsisse.*'

is that it gives me a certain authority when I attempt to analyse the poet's intellectual character and to describe his imaginative habits. Almost at once I began to occupy towards him the attitude, and something much more than the attitude, of the famous old servant to Molière. From the first—and indeed in a measure this continued long after his retirement—he formed the practice of submitting to me all his compositions before he considered them as finished, since, to continue the quotation begun a moment ago,

> He who wrote the writing, as sheet by sheet was penned,
> (This all was long ago, Sir!) would read it to his Friend.

The statement is not an idle one. I believe that of all the innumerable verses composed by Austin Dobson from 1875 onwards there is not a single one now preserved which was not recited or read to me, or submitted to me in its first draft. Of his prose the same cannot quite be said, perhaps, but I am at a loss to point to a single prose work, even, which was not read to me before it was sent to press. It must be expressly understood that I was not expected merely to admire, or in the first instance principally to admire, but to criticize textually with the utmost severity. 'Remember,' he once wrote to me, 'I depend on you to drive the harvest mice out of my standing corn!' I

endeavoured, with the best of my ability, to act up to that responsibility, and I examined every line, weighed every adjective, shook my head over every inversion, with rhadamanthine severity. Dobson did not always, of course, accept my verbal censure, but he gave to every suggestion his patient attention; and sometimes three, or even four, drafts of a poem would be submitted to me before we were both completely satisfied. When I look back over nearly half a century, I am astonished to recall with what serenity, with what an absence of vanity or irritability, he received my verbal criticisms, which were sometimes, I am afraid, vivaciously expressed.

His next volume of poems, *Proverbs in Porcelain*, which appeared in 1877, displays the result of the extreme solicitude for perfection which occupied him in these years. He now mixed a good deal in the society of those contemporaries whom he had not hitherto known, and in whose conversation he found stimulus and encouragement. He saw Andrew Lang, Robert Louis Stevenson, Frederick Locker, and Lord de Tabley (John Leicester Warren); it was with these rather than with the members of an elder generation, in whose company his temperamental timidity forbade him to expand, that Dobson most enjoyed

companionship—with these, and with certain artists from whom he found that a personal sympathy radiated—Alfred Parsons, Edwin Abbey, George Boughton. In *Proverbs in Porcelain*, which the careful reader has to examine in its original form, since the contents of it have long been dispersed in the numerous reprints of Dobson's poetical writings, in this 1877 volume will be found, I think, the quintessence of his genius. Nowhere else is he more completely himself, and this volume contained specimens of every class of his finest production. It opened with a series of miniature dramas in rhyme, six groups in Sèvres, each as light as thistle-down and as subtle as a comedy by Marivaux. No one has excelled, in their own limited compass no one has equalled, these tiny masterpieces of sagacity and tenderness, enshrined in a form which is pure perfection, without a trace of effort or a whiff of the lamp. English literature, rich as it was, is permanently richer for 'Good-Night, Babette!' and 'The Song out of Season'.

It is richer, too, for the studies in the humour and picturesqueness of the eighteenth century, which now began more and more to absorb the attention of the poet. His earliest important essay in this direction was 'The Ballad of Beau Brocade',

and I think that he never went further in the meticulous restoration of a forgotten social scene. This, however, recalls a portion of Austin Dobson's work to which I have not hitherto drawn attention, his prose, critical, historical, and biographical. This will be found to deal almost exclusively with the eighteenth century, that object of his incessant preoccupation. His activity as a prose writer is generally supposed to have been subsequent to his poetical successes, and so in the main it was; but it will probably come as a surprise to many readers of that universal favourite, the *Four Frenchwomen* of 1890, to learn that the essays in this volume belong to Austin Dobson's youth, and were published successively in *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* so early as 1866. He had the habit of recurring, over and over again, to his main themes. For instance, his final biography of Hogarth was published in 1907, but his earliest work on that painter dates from 1879. In a similar way, he made Richardson, Steele, Horace Walpole, Goldsmith, and Fanny Burney his particular property by dint of investigations which never ended. It is instructive to compare the original edition of his *Life of Fielding* (1883) with the 1907 edition,[1] with its careful corrections and important

[1] Actually the latest issue is dated 1925.

additions. He never considered his work finished or the portrait ready to leave the easel; and this is perhaps the reason why, from a purely aesthetic point of view, his prose is rarely so satisfactory as his verse. In his *Fables of Literature and Art*, which are among his most finished poems, nothing is superfluous and every word in its place; in analogous studies of the eighteenth century in prose, the author's excess of conscientiousness makes him overload the page, by clogging it with instances and parentheses with which the reader could well dispense. This was the result of an unflagging severity of scholarship; but it did not always add to the reader's satisfaction.

The closest parallel between Dobson's verse and prose is to be found between his tales in rhyme, such as 'The Noble Patron' and 'The Squire at Vauxhall', and the most graceful of the volumes of essays called *Eighteenth-Century Vignettes*. In both the Horatian influence is strongly marked; at his best he possesses, in fuller measure, perhaps, than any other English writer, the *Horatii curiosa felicitas*. This was not the result of accident or instinct, for it may be interesting for an ear-witness to record that, when Austin Dobson, after the publication of *Vignettes in Rhyme*, was presented to Tennyson, that alarming *vates*

inquired, in sepulchral tones, 'Are you a classic? Then become one! Read Horace every day of your life!' Dobson did not carry out this counsel quite to the letter, but with his customary docility in adopting good advice, he forthwith made a searching and prolonged study of the 'Odes' and 'Epistles', a study the result of which upon his subsequent verse must be patent to the most careless observer, and may be traced upon his meticulous prose as well.

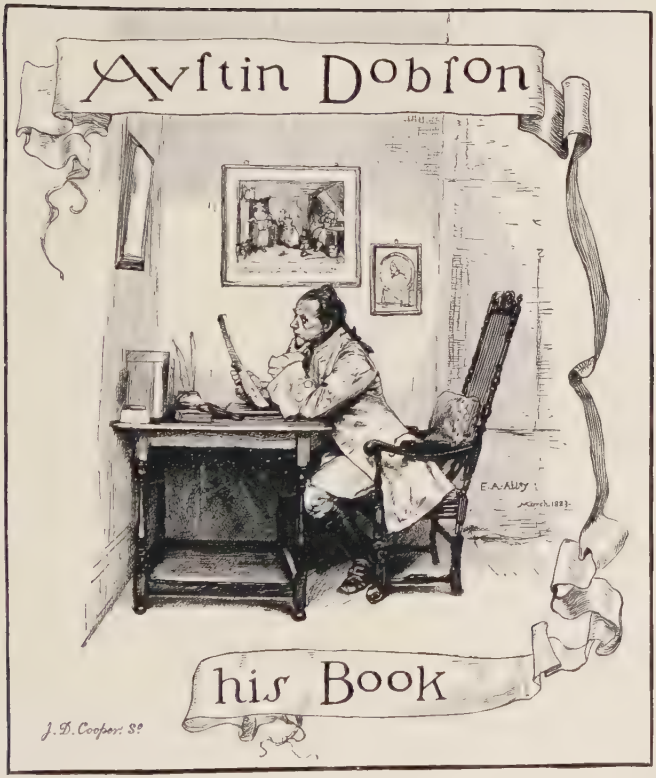
Little concerned with the vain racket of the life about us, Austin Dobson moved in a delicate world of his own, a microcosm where everything was fragrant and harmonious, and where the past and the present were mingled in the clearness of a rose-coloured air. The charm of his wit and the lucidity of his fancy were controlled by the scruples of a fastidious artist; and, when much that is violent has sunken into oblivion for ever, his writings may still float towards posterity on the stream of their purity and perfection.

III

HIS BOOKS OF ASSOCIATION AND OTHERS

IT is always somewhat depressing to see a collection of books such as my father possessed come to be dispersed under the auctioneer's hammer. It was, however, my father's expressed wish that his books should be sold, although, with that kindly feeling that was characteristic of him, he drew the line at those books of which the sale might give pain to any one. Altogether about one-third of his books were sold at Sotheby's in March 1922, but many of the more intimate inscription volumes, to some of which, at all events, my father has referred from time to time in his various volumes of Essays, were secured by members of his family. It is with these volumes for the most part that this chapter is intended to deal. The remainder were 'working' books which remained intact until recently, when they were divided among his family.

A large number of books by Andrew Lang were included in the sale catalogue, as well as those of other authors presented by that writer to my father at various dates. Among these latter



AUSTIN DOBSON'S BOOK-PLATE

By Edwin A. Abbey

books I may mention a little Elzevir Horace, in its old red leather binding, containing the following lines in Andrew Lang's handwriting:

> The Bard was short to outward view,
> And 'short',—to match,—this copy too;
> But, being HORACE, still he 's dear,
> And still,—though cropped,—an Elzevir!

Among the former I secured a copy of *Letters to Dead Authors*, 1888, in which is inserted:

> Go, Letters to the irresponsive Ghosts
> That scarce will heed you less than living Men.
> For now New Books come thicker than on coasts
> And meads of Asia swarm the sea birds, when
> The snow wind drives them south, in clamorous hosts,
> From their salt marshes by Cayster's fen.

I also secured Andrew Lang's edition of *Perrault's Popular Tales*, for the sake of a sheet pasted inside and inscribed:

> 'Another Way'
> Why seem the singers of old time,
> The statesmen—Homer,—Cicero,—
> When *you* translate, no more sublime?
> No more the men we used to know?
> Why, when you lend them style and rhyme,
> You make them all Perraults,—Perrault!

Among the works of contemporary poets there were numerous volumes owing authorship or editorship to Frederick Locker. A large-paper

copy of *Lyra Elegantiarum* attracted me because of its inscription in the Editor's handwriting:

> Verse of Society,
> Full of variety,
> Sentiment—Piety—
> Lark and 'lurliety'—
> Strictest Sobriety
> No impropriety—
> Here Locker and Kernahan and Kernahan and Locker
> Tie a posy for Beauty. That nothing shall shock her,
> *That's* their anxiety.

Another volume of Frederick Locker's Selected Works contained the following in the Author's hand:—'A jingle to Dobson's a difficult job, so friend, for this once, let me call you Fitz-Dob.' It was, however, secured by another buyer.

A copy of Henley's poems bore the characteristic words 'W.E.H. to His Old Friend and Fellow Sportsman A.D.', while another very limited edition of some of the same author's poems contained the unique and perhaps to some people surprising inscription 'To Austin Dobson, from his friend and *pupil*. W.E.H.' The italics are mine.

Among the several volumes of Sir William Watson's poems, I may mention a copy of *Wordsworth's Grave*, for the sake of the following poem in the poet's handwriting.

To Austin Dobson.

Yes! urban is your Muse, and owns
An empire based on London stones;
Yet flowr's, as mountain violets sweet,
Spring from the pavement 'neath her feet.

Of wilder birth this Muse of mine—
Hill cradled, and baptised with brine;
And 'tis for her a sweet despair
To watch that courtly step and air!

Yet surely she without reproof,
Greeting may send from realms aloof,
And even claim a tie in blood
And dare to deem it sisterhood.

For well we know, those maidens be
All daughters of Mnemosyne;
And 'neath the unifying sun,
Many the songs—but Song is one.

This poem, dedicated to my father, reminds me of another which occurs in a volume of Mr. Richard le Gallienne's entitled *October Vagabonds*. The many generous gifts of books made to me by my father during his lifetime included most of Mr. le Gallienne's inscription volumes, but *October Vagabonds* is particularly precious on account of the following lines. Whether they have appeared elsewhere I do not know. They were written from Green's Farm, Connecticut, in February 1911.

The friend who sends this book to you,
Across three thousand miles of sea,
Dear Master—this I like to think—
Is twice my friend, being your friend too;
Across the drifting years a link
With that old graciousness to me—
A boyish muse that dared to bring
Its early childish offering
Beneath the shadow of your bays,
Fearing to hope a little praise.
How fast the time has gone since then,
And now how strange to meet again,
And hear your old-world virginals
Beside the thunder of the Falls!

Although my father was, throughout his life, the recipient of many requests for his autograph, he was not himself an autograph collector. His admiration of the art of C. Coquelin, however, on one occasion prompted him to ask deliberately for an autograph which he apparently did not possess. The result is a piece of note-paper headed Lyceum Theatre, inscribed:

Ma Vie
Ce fut d'être celui qu'on souffle et qu'on oublie
to my friend Austin Dobson
C. Coquelin.
18 Juillet '98.

The volume in which it is pasted is Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, in which Coquelin was acting at the time.

There is, in my father's study at Ealing, a particular set of shelves, hidden away in a somewhat dark corner, which for some reason or other never attracted my predatory instincts to any large extent. These shelves were a repository for the kind of book that one unearthed from what my father, in one of his Eighteenth-Century Vignettes, refers to as the 'four-penny boxes'. The volumes were so uncomfortably tightly packed and dusty, and the darkness of the corner so inconvenient, that a thorough investigation had not been carried out, at all events for some considerable time. When sorting out my father's books after his death, I called in the aid of his old friend, Mr. R. J. Lister, the compiler of Sir Edmund Gosse's Library Catalogue,[1] which was incidentally one of my most prized acquisitions at the sale. I remember well Mr. Lister's arrival with all the booksellers' catalogues he could lay hands on. If he expected to find a Shakespeare Folio, I am afraid he was disappointed; but we did find a volume by one of Shakespeare's contemporaries, namely, a First Edition of Sir John Suckling's *Fragmenta Aurea*, 1646, but alas! without the portrait by Marshall. Whether my father knew that he possessed it or realized its value, I do not know.

[1] I am referring to the limited edition of 1893.

Another volume from this dark corner is also perhaps worth mentioning—a two-volume edition of *The Beauties of the Spectators, Tatlers and Guardians, Connected and Digested under Alphabetical Heads*, printed for J. and R. Tonson in the Strand, 1763. One interest attaching to this book is the inscription inside the first volume:—'To the Twin Sisters Miss Elizabeth and Miss Caroline Grigg. Sep: 1772,' followed by these lines:

> Freedom and Virtue, Twin born from Heaven came.
> And like two sisters fair, are both the same.
> On thee Elizabeth may virtue smile!
> And thou, sweet Caroline, Life's cares beguile
> May Gracious Providence protect and guide,
> That Days and Years in peace may slide;
> And bring you Bliss, in Parent's love,
> Till you shall reach the bliss above.

and ending up 'Thus prays your very true friend and affectionate servant J. Hanway'. Upon the outside of the two volumes the initials of the fair recipients are tastefully arranged within a circle of stars.

The other interest attaching to the book affects the author of the above inscription. This was the worthy philanthropist of whom Johnson said 'that he acquired some reputation by travelling abroad, but lost it all by travelling at home'; the same Hanway of whom my father in his Essay 'Han-

way's Travels',[1] says 'His misfortune was that, like many excellent persons, his sense of humour was imperfect, and his infirmity of digression chronic'. My father was loath to say anything unkind of any one, but this Hanway must have been an incomparable bore.

From the several different editions of the life of William Hogarth, which appeared between 1879 and 1907, it will be evident that my father's researches into the subject of this artist's life-history must have been extensive, and the number of his Hogarth books proportionately large. To some extent this was true, but my father, some short time before he died, made a gift of all his Hogarth Prints to the London Library, and it was therefore decided by my mother to augment this gift by giving my father's Hogarth Books to the same Library, where it was felt that they might prove of use to future students of an artist who seems to be somewhat unappreciated at the moment. The collection included a little work more interesting than valuable by William Hogarth (the artist's father) entitled *Thesaurarium Trilingue Publicum*, and published in 1689. I mention this by way of record, as the volume, mentioned in Wheatley's *Hogarth's London*, was

[1] *Eighteenth-Century Vignettes*, I. 1892.

asked for at the Sotheby sale by a prospective buyer who was, of course, ignorant of the gift referred to above.

There was, however, one particularly interesting Hogarth item which was included in the sale and is now in my collection. This was a folio volume, in which was bound up No. XVII of the *North Briton* (25 September 1762) containing the scurrilous attack upon Hogarth by his *ci-devant* crony, John Wilkes, as well as the reprint that appeared on 21 May 1763, and contained a 'cut in wood from the life' of William Hogarth, with an abnormally bulbous nose. The interest surrounding this reprint lies in the fact that it bears signs of having been folded across the middle and, from the entry in the sale catalogue of the Standly Collection, from which it came, is stated to have been the actual copy carried by Hogarth in his pocket to show to his friends, and afterwards given by Mrs. Hogarth to Samuel Ireland. Whether this copy is, or is not, what it purports to be is somewhat of a mystery, as my father subsequently discovered, in a collection temporarily on loan at the British Museum, another copy of the *North Briton*, bearing a similar notification to the effect that it was Hogarth's copy, and had subsequently, as above, been given to Samuel Ireland by Mrs. Hogarth.

On the whole, however, I think my father was inclined to pride himself on being the owner of the genuine copy.

Perhaps the most interesting volume of which I obtained possession was a copy of *Memoires relating to the State of the Royal Navy of England, for Ten Years, Determin'd December* 1688, by Samuel Pepys, published in 1690. A note on the reverse of the title-page runs 'March 14. 1723/4. The Gift of C. Jackson to Thos. Coram', but at the end of the volume is pasted the original of the following letter:

To Mr. Mills These Worthy Sir I happened to find among my few Books, Mr. Pepys, his memoires, wch I thought might be acceptable to you & therefore pray you to accept of it. I am wth much Respect Sir Your most humble ser^t^ Thomas Coram June 10th 1746.

Not only did the volume once belong to 'that brave old philanthropist, Captain Thomas Coram of the Foundling Hospital', but it contains here and there MS. corrections in the author's own handwriting, and is enriched, to boot, with two portrait plates by Robert White after Kneller.

It is always interesting to watch the grouping of the various volumes in a sale catalogue. Books that seem rare to the seller are hidden away with others in a lot, while volumes without apparently

any intrinsic merit are entered as separate items. There is little doubt that, if one had the time and patience to visit auction rooms regularly and inspect the books prior to sale, one could obtain one's *desiderata* at far less cost than in a bookseller's shop. I was amazed at the low prices which some of the lots containing several volumes fetched at my father's sale. For example, one lot of eighteen volumes went for £2 14*s.* 0*d.* They were mostly French classics, nicely bound, but one volume contained Walter Pater's signature on the flyleaf, while another contained that of Robert Southey, the poet. Again, a lot comprising a first edition of Steele's *Tender Husband*, three other Steele items, in excellent condition, and a first edition of Colley Cibber's *Careless Husband*, enticed no higher bid than 5*s.*

In one of the larger volumes which I secured, a copy of an illustrated American edition of my father's poem 'The Sundial', was inserted a large folding Menu Card of one of the first, if not actually the first dinner of the 'Kinsmen'. On the front page is a delightful little etching by Edwin Abbey, R.A., while within are fourteen autograph signatures including those of Randolph Caldecott, Alfred Parsons, Edwin Abbey, and G. H. Boughton.

Broomfield,
Frensham,
Farnham,
Surrey.

24th April 1885

My dear Dobson,

I am very much obliged to you for so kindly taking such a lot of trouble for me about Kent Street. Your information & conjectures are what I wanted —

I don't know what

"Mumpers" are [illegible]

find out if I think [illegible]

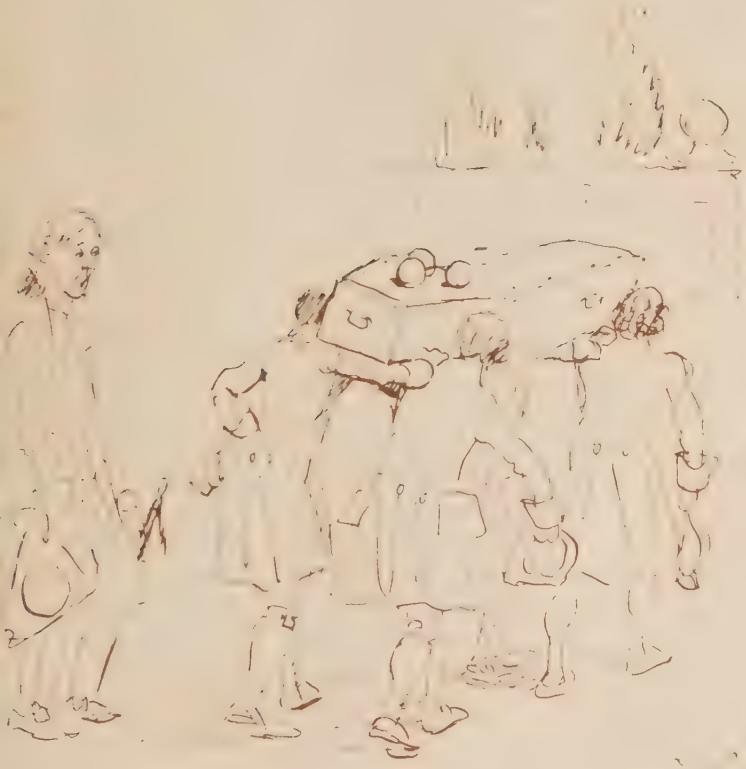
[illegible] [illegible]

don't further trouble

Yours very truly

R Caldecott

To Austin Dobson Esq.



From a Roll of the Kinsmen, which I came across among my father's papers, I find that my father was elected a Kinsman, in company with a number of his friends, in 1883, the second year of the Brotherhood (from which he withdrew, I find, in 1897), but I make special mention of the four names above, as my father was particularly happy in a little coterie of artist friends.

The price fetched at the sale by one or two rather elaborate volumes illustrated by Alfred Parsons and Edwin Abbey was quite extraordinary; and the price was even more marked in the case of Randolph Caldecott, whose *Complete Collection of Pictures*—a limited edition, with my father's preface—went for £16 10*s*., while no less than £30 was paid for first editions of the picture books in two volumes, containing between them three original sketches and some illustrated letters.

There is no doubt that G. H. Boughton, R.A., had a genuine admiration for my father's poetry and prose alike. Some time ago, my researches in a second-hand bookshop were rewarded by my finding a copy of *At the Sign of the Lyre* for next to nothing, containing a letter and inscription from this artist to a friend saying how much nicer it was 'to have a "Dobson" of one's "very own" than to have but a fleeting "London Library"

taste of him'. But there was also in my father's bookcase at Ealing another copy of the same volume containing a delightful little sketch opposite the poem 'Love in Winter'. This particular poem seems to have aroused Boughton's artistic feeling in no small degree. Besides the pen sketch reproduced opposite, he executed a most delightful water-colour drawing of the same theme, and this was included in the sale and is now in my possession. Even this, however, was only a motif for a larger picture which was exhibited in the Academy in 1891. And this was not all. In an hotel in which I was staying in 1922 at St. Ives, I came across a volume of the *Art Journal*, which contained an article on the work of G. H. Boughton. One of the few pictures illustrating it was a reproduction of a pastel on the same subject, which I had not seen before.

Another artist with whom my father was on most friendly terms, and whose work he greatly admired, as every one must, was the late Miss Kate Greenaway. Her presentation volumes all commanded high prices, especially the little Almanacs, one of which contained an original sketch.

In his *De Libris*, my father wrote an article on Kate Greenaway as a companion to another in the same volume on Hugh Thomson. The article

Love in Winter

was illustrated by some small pencil sketches in my father's possession, but, from the time of their return from the publishers to the date of my father's death, they completely disappeared.

When, however, Messrs. Sotheby sent me a proof of the sale catalogue, I observed to my surprise that *Marigold Garden*, a fair-sized quarto volume, was shown as containing five loose original pencil sketches by the artist. Here were the missing drawings, which I promptly had transferred to a separate lot and acquired myself.

No man was more generous with his original drawings than that lovable artist, the late Hugh Thomson. It was interesting to observe, not long ago, a statement to the effect that Hugh Thomson had at last 'come into his own', because the books illustrated by him were now shown in booksellers' catalogues under his own name, rather than that of the author. Ever since the time when, as a boy, I used to supply him with pencil and paper in order that he might draw something, he never failed to keep us supplied with tokens of his generosity. His original drawings are somewhat difficult to obtain in the open market, probably because the recipients of his gifts were people who were not likely to part with them readily. My father and I were always specially favoured by

him, and his gifts of books were invariably enriched on the title-page by some incomparable piece of playfulness. Moreover, knowing that I had a predilection for his work, he on more than one occasion inscribed the volume to A.D., leaving my father and myself to decide for whom it was really intended.

In passing I may mention that one of my most prized Hugh Thomsons was secured for a trifle, under rather odd circumstances. A friend, who himself had no particular knowledge of Hugh Thomson's work, saw what he was convinced was one of this artist's originals in a small second-hand dealer's shop in one of the suburbs. From the detailed description which he gave me of it on a post-card, I became equally convinced that he was right, and I accordingly instructed him to buy. I paid him a liberal commission, but the actual sum which was paid for what turned out to be the frontispiece to my father's *Ballad of Beau Brocade* was 2*s.* 6*d.* The picture was an illustration to the poem 'A Gentlewoman of the Old School', and is an example of Hugh Thomson's craftsmanship at its very best, when his sight was good and his pen-work like gossamer.

There was really only one book which I, as an ardent collector of Stevenson, was sorry not to have secured, and that was a privately printed copy

of the Henley and Stevenson *Admiral Guinea*, autographed by the former. It reached a bid of £38. My father had very few Stevenson first editions; a first edition of *Underwoods* I secured at the sale, while *A Child's Garden of Verses* was sold in his lifetime, together with a copy of *The New Arabian Nights*, which fetched the record price of £102[1] at Sotheby's just after the War. He also possessed what I believe is greatly coveted on the other side of the Atlantic, the small privately printed and limited edition of Sir Edmund Gosse's *Notes to the Pentland Edition*, containing one or two poems not previously printed. With the solitary exception of his Library Catalogue, to which a passing reference has already been made, none of my father's unique collection of Sir Edmund Gosse's books, practically all inscription copies, were included in the sale, but my mother, after my father's death, added to my Stevenson collection the little Edmund Gosse volume above mentioned. It may be appropriate here to chronicle a few of the rarer volumes by Sir Edmund Gosse in my father's possession. There is a *Memoir of Thomas Lodge*. Privately printed 1882. (Ten copies only.) *An Epistle to Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes on his seventy-fifth birthday.*

[1] As far as I know this 'record' still stands.

August 29 1889. (Forty copies only, privately printed.) *Wolcott Balestier. A Portrait Sketch.* Privately printed 1892. (One hundred copies only, of which ten are on Japanese vellum paper.) *Henry Fielding. An Essay*, 1898. (Twelve copies only.) *Essays from the Guardian*, by Walter Pater (containing a paper on *Mr. Gosse's Poems*). Privately printed 1896. (One hundred copies only.) *Mr. Swinburne. Personal Recollections.* Reprinted from the *Fortnightly Review*, 1909. (Twenty-five copies only.) *Letters to the Press*, by Algernon Charles Swinburne. Privately printed, 1912, with an Introduction by Edmund Gosse. (Thirty-two copies only.) *Life of Swinburne.* Privately printed, 1912. (Fifty copies only). *Lady Dorothy Nevill. An Open Letter.* Privately printed, 1913. (Thirty copies only.)

Among the inscription copies are the following:

On Viol & Flute, 1873, containing these lines:

To Austin Dobson Esq.

Accept This book, my dearest D.
Of vagrom verses vamped by me;
A larger copy cannot be,
For Three were made, and only Three
With edges Thus left broad and free.

The Unknown Lover. A Drama for Private Acting, 1878, in which are the following lines:

Dear Bard of old brocaded times
Of patch and sack and fan,
Poet whose own rich-coloured rhymes
Revive the age of Anne,
Take these slight scenes, all incomplete
From one who sits at Congreve's feet.
24 Jan. 1878.

The *Life of William Congreve*, 1888, which is inscribed:

My dear Austin Dobson

Ah! would to me your wizard skill were given
To fetch a wigged and ruffled bard from Heav'n;
You guide your phantoms down Parnassus' slope,
And win, ah! wonder, living speech from Pope;
Alas! a coxcomb's wand of lath I boast,
Too weak to split the cloud and raise the ghost;
Congreve! I call,—but, out upon my flan
My Congreve stalks, a piteous mist of man;
Then let your nimbler fancy intervene,
Move your real Congreve o'er my hollow scene,
Forgive the errors of my shiftless art,
And to my Beaumont's show a Wordsworth's heart.
1 Aug., 1888.

A copy of *King Erik*, 1876, containing the following:

To Austin Dobson

Whether like porcelain, delicately Dresden,
Daintiest verse-form tempt you to bewitch us,
Or, more stern, satirico-didactic
Measures Horatian.

Still we are charmed, and still are we delighted!
Lo! this blander dowry of the Muses,
Lo! this rapier keener than a sword is,
Scorn not and blunt not!

Thou no mouth of a thundering Olympus,
Thou no seer made frantically Delphic
Yet with the brand of the service of Apollo
Sealed where the brows bend!

16 Feb., 1876.

And finally there is a large paper copy of *Gossip in a Library*, 1892, with the following:

To Austin Dobson

Underneath my poplars pale
In that secret velvet vale
Where the Avill murmureth still
By my ivy-mantled mill,
Weary, I, in Autumn weather,
Bound these fluctuant leaves together,
Wondered, as I bade them go,
If they had a fate,—or no!
Wondered, would the unsummon'd guest
Bear the hospitable test,—
Would it hold the fit and few,—
Would it e'en be read by you?

In many ways the most interesting Stevenson item which my father possessed and subsequently gave me was a volume from America. A letter arrived one day from Dr. Rosenbach, of Philadelphia—who not long ago caused so considerable

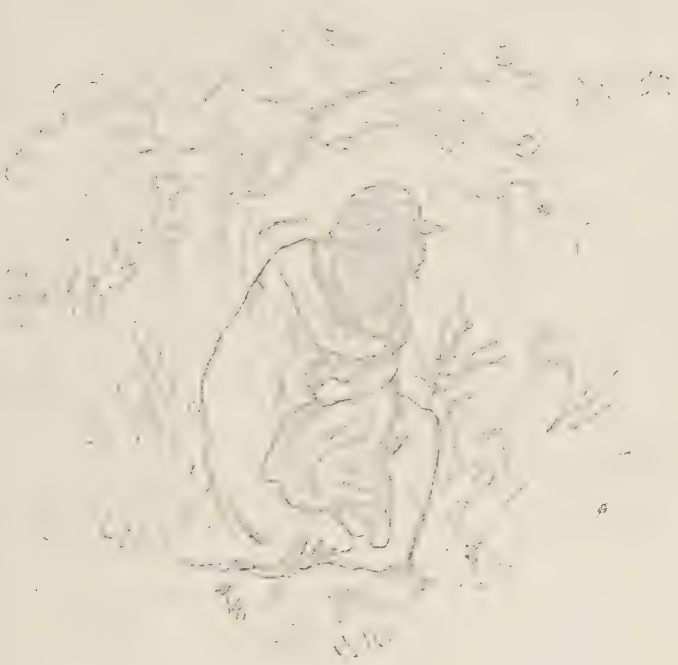
a stir by paying over £15,000 for the original Manuscript of *Alice in Wonderland*—reminding my father of some small Introduction he had done for him years previously, and asking him to accept a catalogue he had prepared of the Stevenson Collection bequeathed by the late Elkins Widener, who went down in the *Titanic*, to the Library at Harvard. The volume did not arrive immediately, and in a rash moment my father announced his intention of transferring it to me, little realizing that it was going to prove a somewhat sumptuous production. I often wonder how many copies reached this country. Only 150 were printed in all. I know Sir E. Gosse and Mr. T. J. Wise each possess one, but the only others of which I have been able to obtain definite trace were Sir Sidney Colvin's copy, which was sold at a Red Cross Sale, and subsequently found its way into the catalogue of a West-End bookseller, and that included in the sale of Sir W. Robertson Nicoll's books about five years ago.[1]

In the preceding pages I have endeavoured to describe some of my father's Books of Association, most of which were included in the sale and, as I have already said, were secured by members of his family. There were, however, a good many

[1] There is one in the British Museum.

other volumes of considerable rarity, which I have not mentioned because they were not necessarily Books of Association. At the same time, any reader who has borne with me so far may up to the present have looked in vain for certain books among my father's collection which might reasonably be expected to have been found in the collection of a writer of his particular inclinations. In order, therefore, that such a reader may not be disappointed, I close with the titles of a few of the more important of such books.

The Garland of Rachel, by Austin Dobson and divers Kindly Hands; Goldsmith's *Memoirs of a Protestant*; Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*; Goldsmith's *The Mystery Revealed*; Goldsmith's *Good Natur'd Man*; Goldsmith's *Retaliation*; Goldsmith's *Haunch of Venison*; Gay's *Trivia* and *The Beggars' Opera*; Steele's *Christian Hero*; Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*; *The History of New York* (Grolier Club); *The Charles Whittinghams* (Grolier Club); Gray's *Odes*; Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and *Wessex Poems and other Verses*, both inscription copies; Locker's *London Lyrics*, privately printed; Rossetti's *Ballads*, with an original poem inserted; Thackeray's *Letters*, with some MS. lines by the novelist; Kate Greenaway's *A Day in a Child's Life* and



AN ILLUSTRATION BY MISS GREENAWAY

Marigold Garden, together with a long set of her Almanacs, containing one original drawing, all inscription copies; *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, both in original numbers. With his Fielding collection he had parted during his lifetime.

One more book deserves perhaps a passing mention. It was a copy of *Corn and Poppies*, by my father's old friend and colleague at the Board of Trade, Cosmo Monkhouse. The volume was published in 1890, but this is one of ten large-paper copies printed for private circulation only which for sentimental reasons was not included in the sale. Within are the following lines:

> What matter, friend, though on the shelves
> One linger longer, I or you.
> If we have been true to ourselves
> And to each other true.
>
> To you at least belong the bays,
> So let me lay them round your head,
> Content if in those after days
> They call us friends when both are dead.

IV

A LITTLE NECROLOGY

BY

George Saintsbury.

IT was in the year 1877—but exactly on what day in it I cannot say, having, as before observed, burnt my diaries—that I first met Mr. Austin Dobson. I had been living out of London for nearly ten years before, and had made few new acquaintances in that city, having just returned to establish myself there, as it turned out, for nearly another twenty. But already for some time, owing chiefly to the then not long established *Academy* and to the Savile Club, a more or less loosely connected literary society—far inferior in quality, of course, to the greater ones of former times and of the present day, but somewhat akin in genus and not utterly contemptible in species—had come into being. I was asked to meet Mr. Dobson at dinner, and we either liked each other well enough or dissembled our dislike completely enough to walk home together from Pall Mall to Kensington. And the friendship, or the simulation thereof, lasted forty-four years; the last card I had from him in his well-known copper-plate 'back-hand' (or whatever is the proper name for

it) was written in May of his last year.[1] In London, during the time of my journalistic activity so often mentioned, we met pretty constantly; after I moved to Edinburgh, less often, though he came to stay with us there when the University gave him an Honorary LL.D. in 1902. But for another fairly long stretch of years, till ill-health interfered with his movements, we used to 'tryst' in a certain small smoking-room at the Athenaeum whenever I came to town. He had a way, after ordering some 'soft' liquor (skilful metrist as he was in words, his only convivial foot was, alas! the *Antibacchius*), of pulling his chair forward, settling himself therein, and saying, '*Now*, let's talk about books', which was very engaging.

In this long acquaintanceship I can remember not merely no quarrel—but no single instance of that uncomfortable reflection, 'I wish he hadn't said that or done this!' which one's friends sometimes suggest to one, and which, no doubt, one sometimes suggests to one's friends. That he was rather sensitive to unfavourable criticism I think very likely; to tell the honest truth, I have yet to meet the man of letters who is wholly indifferent to it. But it never caused the slightest waspishness in him, and he was equally free from an even

[1] 1921.

more curious and far more inexcusable malady or malpractice of our kind, which has been pleasantly called the 'That's *my* Bone!' habit. It is by no means uncommon—almost every one of the craft, even if himself immune, must have known it in others—for men to think that, because they have touched a subject or an author, they have established a 'claim' in the strictest mining sense, and nobody else may make or meddle. You might follow, or accompany, or (which is, perhaps, most unforgivable of all) anticipate Dobson in any matter without his being in the least aggrieved; and whatever he knew about Fielding or Walpole, Hogarth or Bewick, was, whether published or unpublished, heartily at the service of fellow-students. Nor was it a case of 'light come, light go'.

For there never was a more indefatigable 'student' than he himself was. And here again he had a meritorious peculiarity, perhaps rarer than it is thought to be. There have been persons of great distinction—I have, I think, glanced at this before—as well as others of none at all, who take to subjects with zest, work at them for a time lustily, turn out good or bad results of their work, and then lose all, or most, of their interest in it. *Leur siège est fait.* The dish is 'off'. The late Mr. Lowell once confided to me that he *had* once

been very fond of Old French, but that the authors who were exhumed since that time did not appeal to him. They might be as good as, or better than, his old friends, but he didn't want them. This rather hedonistic satiety never showed itself in Dobson.

It may, however, be said, and with justice, 'One is very glad to hear that Mr. Dobson was a good companion and a generous student; but there is no lack of such. What was he really as a writer, and especially as a poet?' The question is perfectly legitimate, and the last part of it is by far the most important. Dobson's essays, his biographies, his editorial work, his *Bookman's Budget*, &c., were most agreeable reading, not easily to be beaten for charm of manner, and not to be beaten at all—very rarely even approached—in fullness and accuracy of matter. But it was possible to imagine some one else doing them. Was this the case with his poetry? For that is the question, and having myself some little acquaintance with the history of literature and of criticism—which may, from one point of view, be translated 'the reception of literature as contrasted with its production'—I should say that it is a question the importance of which is, as a rule, not quite sufficiently considered.

I have seen, since his death, Dobson dismissed—not at all contemptuously, but as a matter of course—as a 'minor' poet. Now this facile phrase, which has had at times quite a palpitating history, is, like many others, one fears, frequently if not generally, used with a very vague meaning. A man may be called, and actually be, a minor poet in comparison with undoubted majors of his own or some other time. Or he may be held to be such in consequence of the setting up of some very high standard of poetry itself, which is to apply equally to all times. Or, lastly, he may seem to be minor because he does not deal with the most important and grandiose *kinds* of poetry—narrative, dramatic, or lyrical. The first calculus is, it will be seen at once, shifting and untrustworthy, though occasionally applicable. According to it, a man may be a minor poet at one part of his career, and a major, though on the score of no fresh work, at another. Everybody is a minor poet, perhaps, if your standard is Shakespeare, Milton, and Shelley in the three divisions. So with the second. The impossibility of getting any agreed estimate of what the essence of poetry is makes it unpractical, to say nothing more. For those, indeed, who accept the doctrine of the poetic 'moment', the whole thing is idle. There are poets and there are those who

are not poets; but there is no majority or minority except in point of mere bulk or number. With Shakespeare and Shelley the moments come thick as Perseids in August or Leonids in November. In Beddoes and Darley they only flash now and then, sometimes in this class reducing their light to that of will-o'-the-wisps or glow-worms. In people like Rogers or Kirke White they never come at all.

Out of this welter of uncertainty one may perhaps pick two useful test-questions: 'Was Dobson minor in one way as regards poets of his own time?' and 'Was his kind of poetry minor in the other?' Neither of these questions is invidious, and the consideration of both, especially of the latter, may be profitable.

As regards poets who had already published when he began to write, there can, of course, be no hesitation in admitting that he was 'minor' to Tennyson and Browning certainly, to Matthew Arnold somewhat less so. As regards those nearer his own age, he certainly could not contest majority with either Dante or Christina Rossetti, with Swinburne or with William Morris. But he was in much more than the same ratio 'major' to Lewis Morris or Alfred Austin. Looking at a later time, one fancies a discussion as to who

should succeed the last-named writer as Poet Laureate. There seemed to be no doubt that for the purpose there were only four possible candidates, unless the great mistake at Tennyson's death was to be repeated. These were the present holder, Mr. Kipling, Mr. W. B. Yeats, and Mr. Dobson himself. They would all 'pass' in poetry as far as poetry was concerned; but then, according to all wise precedent, a Satan would be called in to object. He could find nothing to say against Mr. Bridges except that he was not popularly known enough. But he would point out that there were in this country such a number of people who hated it that no minister would face their hubbub if Mr. Kipling were chosen, and this would have to be sorrowfully admitted. Refreshed by this, the Accuser would go on to suggest delicately that a sort of counterbalancing consideration might make Mr. Yeats's appointment unpopular. Nor would this be denied. But with Mr. Dobson he would take his stand on the '*kind* of poetry' argument. Was this, albeit certainly poetry, and very perfect poetry of its kind, major or minor when you regarded the kind itself?

It was very like Satan to say this; but there is no need to grapple with the whole of his objection. Fate, we know, so far conceded it that Mr. Dob-

son was *not* made Poet Laureate. But in the remainder of this short tribute it may be best to point out that the assignment of perfection *in* the kind can make a good fight for itself. There have been grumbles, we know, and in very high quarters, against 'faultlessness' in poetry. But where they have been made justly it will generally, if not invariably, be found that the work objected to has been work aiming at that 'Sublime' which the chief objector, Longinus, was himself discussing. Dobson did not aim at the Sublime. He aimed at something for which we have, unfortunately, no current word or favourable description, because we have wantonly degraded and made ignoble its proper designation, 'elegant'. Of the Muse of Elegance as she was before 'her Godhead passed away', Dobson was really Pontifex Maximus. It was natural enough that his priesthood should appeal less and less to a public which, after the very earliest part of his time, was tending even more to jazz in colour and sound, to cubism in outline, and to any kind of nonsense and rubbish so long as it is glaring and blaring, in public and private affairs.

The combined intricacy and sureness of his address to a differently constituted audience may be shown by studying in smallest space one of the

smallest of all his poems—one of those triolets which the British public, perhaps justly from its own point of view, considered frivolous, and which a certain publisher (with still more obvious justice from *his* point of view) insisted on paying for at the rate of five lines, not eight lines, because one of them appeared three times and another twice. (I quote from memory.)

> Rose kissed me to-day;
> Will she kiss me to-morrow?
> Let that be as it may,
> Rose kissed me to-day.
> But the pleasure gives way
> To a savour of sorrow.
> Rose kissed me to-day;
> *Will* she kiss me to-morrow?

Trivial? Sentimental? Childish? &c., &c. Well, *is* it?

One would like to know, whether those who think it so have, or have not, perceived the following things about it. In the first place, short as it is, its shortness gives the scenario of a by no means uncomplicated sequence of thought and feeling. The lover thinks with satisfaction of the agreeable occurrence, and as he does so the inevitable Care jumps behind on the thought that is carrying him so softly. He tries to shake her off. 'Let that be as it may', is almost the gesture itself, and re-

affirms the actual ecstasy. But this particular occupant of pillions has far too firm a seat and tight a hold; and the only couplet of the four which contains no repetition dismally admits her constricting purchase. In the last, as it echoes the first, the discouragement has altogether the best of it. The horrid '*But*'—once actually used—dominates the whole. Rose did kiss him to-day; but *will* she do so to-morrow? Not bad διάνοια—'thought-substance'—for eight apparent and five substantive two-foot lines. Let me, in the second place, point out that this could not have been done in prose, because it would be impossible there to give the different inflexions and reversions of thought, rhythmed and 'set' appropriately as they are now—and then I shall have given the heads of a much longer pleading '*Against* the minority of Austin Dobson'.

V

LETTERS FROM HIS FRIENDS

1867–1878

DURING his latter years Austin Dobson was inclined to find his possessions rather a burden to him. From time to time he would set himself the impossible task of setting his affairs in order. First he would want to sell his books, which latterly became too numerous to be conveniently handy for reference, and I can well remember devoting at least one Bank Holiday to going through a partially completed card catalogue, and with him marking those which might be sold. Then he would become intrigued with the idea of arranging his correspondence—not that it was by any means in a state of disorder, but he scarcely ever destroyed a letter, and from time to time he felt the need for a little more space in his already overcrowded study. His eyesight was, however, rapidly failing, and the task of looking through books or reading old letters soon became wearisome, so that nothing really effective was ever completed during his lifetime.

For my own part, as the executor primarily responsible for the management of his literary

AUSTIN DOBSON'S BOOK-PLATE

By Alfred Parsons

estate, I am not sorry that things were left as they were. Arrangement might have led to a process of thinning by destruction, and the letters from his friends constitute an invaluable historical commentary both on himself and his work, as well as on that of his contemporaries, and make, I venture to think, not uninteresting reading.

I have taken therefore the somewhat unusual course of placing on record, in a few chapters of which this is the first, some representative examples of letters which it is hoped may be of general interest, covering as they do a wide ground. That I should refrain—except to a limited extent—from taking the more natural course of publishing letters written by my father himself, is due to a variety of reasons. To attempt to collect such letters from a host of recipients generally ends in a somewhat scrappy result, and would hardly have commended itself to an author who left strict injunctions to his executors that he was opposed to any sort of Memoir. Moreover, the great mass of letters written by my father were of a nature unlikely to appeal to the mass. Not that he could not write a most amusing letter, but the majority were written in connexion with his work on the eighteenth century, and contained information, usually of a detailed character, in reply to the

endless inquiries that were showered upon him by all and sundry, who were only too willing to tap this unfailing source of eighteenth-century lore.

The letters from his friends may be divided into two groups. The more important, and naturally those of an appreciatory nature, are laid down in two large bound volumes, which my father regarded as heirlooms. Although they were only fully completed up to about 1901, various loose letters have been added from time to time, to bring the record more or less up to date.

The remainder of his correspondence was more or less unsorted and very bulky. The whole of it was carefully examined after his death, and only the more unimportant and formal documents were destroyed; hundreds and hundreds of intensely interesting letters remain.

For the moment I propose to deal with a few letters representative of those to be found in the bound volumes above referred to. Later on I shall have recourse to the rest of the main correspondence, but I should like to take this opportunity of thanking those who have freely allowed me to quote the various letters printed in this and the succeeding chapters. In many cases, however, where the writers have died, it has proved impossible to trace any source to which application for the

necessary permission could properly be made, and in these cases I hope I may escape the charge of having printed anything to which the writers or their representatives, whoever they may be, could take exception.

The correspondence begins so far back as 1867, and the first letter quoted is one from Mr. Alexander Macmillan, to whom my father had evidently sent a batch of his earlier poems in case they could be accepted for *Macmillan's Magazine*. It is dated 13 March 1867, and reads:

I am very much obliged to you for sending me your poems. Those after the Italian seem to me very clever, though to tell the truth it does seem to me rather a waste of time to imitate, or make attempts to revivify what surely now is very dead, and which it seems to me doubtful if it were ever very much alive. The 'Death of Lancelot' too is a pretty reproduction. I care much more for the 'Landlady', and were it not that our space is very crowded at present I would have been tempted to ask our Editor if he could find a corner for it. But, poor man, his look of despair alarms me. He has so many friends who have the literary and poetic faculty.

I return them by this post. I confess that my feeling is that it would be well for you to wait for a time before attempting much in the way of publication.

I would suggest your sending 'My Landlady' to *Once a Week*. It is the most cultured of our weeklies.

What happened to 'My Landlady' (the poem above referred to) in the immediate future is not

clear, but it ultimately appeared in the *Nautical Magazine* for December 1872. The 'Death of Lancelot' was no doubt an early version of 'The Dying of Tanneguy du Bois', which is dealt with in the following letter, dated 7 March 1868, from Anthony Trollope, who had already accepted 'Une Marquise' for publication in *St. Pauls Magazine*, the first of a long series of poems to appear in that magazine:

> I return your poems, though I like them much, especially that of the dying knight, because, as it seems to me, they are not sufficiently clear in their expression for the general readers of a magazine. The general reader would have no idea for instance why 'There is no bird in any last year's nest' . . .
>
> I think it is indispensable that poetry for a magazine should be so clearly intelligible that ill-instructed, uneducated, but perhaps intelligent minds can comprehend it. I hope you will forgive me, if you do not agree with me.

No doubt this letter alludes to a *very* early version of 'The Dying of Tanneguy du Bois', which finally appeared in *Under the Crown* in June 1869. Most of my father's admirers put this poem with its haunting refrain very high in order of merit.

In a letter dated 8 October 1868, the same writer accepts 'The Story of Rosina':

> Certainly we will have Boucher,—which is admirable,

and not a stanza too long. The feeling of it is excellent, and the execution generally very happy. There is no doubt about our having it. . . .

Then, of course, come the less agreeable remarks, a criticism or two as to points, 'which, however, I will leave to your judgement'.

. . . I return the MS.—but will have it printed as soon as you have looked to these things.

I know I am sticking pins into you by my remarks;—but whatever is an Editor to do?

I purposely omit a good deal of this letter, as it would be unintelligible without the poem before one, but the criticisms were so detailed as to indicate an unusual patience on the part of an editor who was evidently not prepared to adopt one of the simple alternatives, acceptance or refusal. So far as it is possible to judge, all the writer's suggestions were accepted.

On 8 December 1869, Anthony Trollope wrote:

I lunched yesterday with my dear friends George Eliot and G. H. Lewes,—as to whom you will at any rate know who they are. I regard them as the two best critics of English poetry (or prose) whom I know. They were very loud in their praise of your Autumn Idyll, and George Eliot asked me to let the Author know what she thought of it.

The poem in question had just appeared in *St. Pauls Magazine.*

For the next two or three years there is little to record by way of correspondence. The poet's output was considerable, and the large proportion of his poems continued to appear in *St. Pauls*, although his friend Anthony Trollope appears to have severed his connexion with the magazine some time in 1870.

In 1873 my father published *Vignettes in Rhyme*, his first volume of poems, and this undoubtedly brought him in touch with a wider circle of admirers and correspondents.

On 13 November 1873, a correspondence began with Frederick Locker which continued without intermission for many years. On that day he wrote:

> One line to tell you that I have now finished your book, and that I like it very much. I lent it to Mr. Tennyson, and I assure you he was greatly pleased with it. He spoke of your talent, your sensibility, and the lightness of your touch as remarkable, and such words of praise from him are valuable, as he is a conscientious, and I am bound to say a fastidious critic.
>
> I will confess to you that when I put down your book, I took up my lyrics and was struck with one peculiar difference between them. It was like passing from Piccadilly in November to Kensington Gardens in May. I do not say that perhaps there may not be some people who will go on liking poor old Piccadilly the most, I for instance! and I hope that there will: but still I feel that your charming

book will be, and ought to be, the more popular especially with women, whom it is so delightful to please, and who are so useful in blowing the trumpet of a man's fame.

Come and see me some day in going to or returning from your office.

To this is added a postscript: 'I do not think you have any more sincere admirer than myself.'

On 19 December, G. H. Lewes wrote:

I have been slowly sipping and re-sipping the small flask of Falernian you were good enough to send me, and cannot resist telling you how charmed I have been with the delicacy, ease and real poetic feeling of this vintage. To drop the clumsy metaphor and to keep within the region of sincerity I will add that many times in the course of the volume I have regretted a too artificially colloquial expression and the scraps of French which give a patchy and ostentatiously frivolous aspect to a Muse which in her better moods is wholly charming. If I did not admire many of the poems very much you will believe me when I say that I should never have thought of specifying what seems not admirable.

On 28 February 1874, Mr. Locker wrote again:

I told Mr. Theodore Martin to look at your book, at the Club, and he was so pleased with it that he bought a copy. The other day the Queen asked him to recommend her some books, and he lent her his copy of your book, which she has not returned! So we presume She likes it as well as he does! but he does not like to lose his book, and he said something

about buying another copy. I think he would be much flattered if you wrote his name on a copy, and sent it to him in Onslow Square, but do not do this if there would be the *slightest* difficulty.

It is clear that the suggestion was carried into effect. At all events an intermittent correspondence with Mr. (afterwards Sir) Theodore Martin ensued, and my father became the possessor of a good many inscribed copies of the latter's works.

I shall allude later to the appreciation which Queen Victoria showed for my father's poems, but the present is perhaps a convenient place to record an interesting remark attributed to 'Carmen Sylva', the Queen of Roumania. William Le Queux in his recent book, *Things I know* (1923), quotes the Queen as having said to him: 'I love Austin Dobson's poems, and "The Sundial" most of all. I have tried to model some of my own verses after the lines he has taken, with, alas! but poor success, I fear.'

From the following letter dated 18 May 1874, from Augusta Webster, I only quote a portion:

I did not thank you at once for your Vignettes because I was waiting to have read and re-read them. Such is my honesty that I always read a book (or as much of it as is possible to weak human nature) before acknowledging the receipt of it—you may imagine with what perplexing consequences

sometimes. However, I had no fear as to your 'cherry-stones'.

Much of your book is dainty, tender, fine pointed poetry, and all of it is full of happy touches and of perfect workmanship. My husband has been reading it with much enjoyment, and yesterday I was reading several choice poems of it to him to the satisfaction of both of us. I regret to say that he wound up our literary afternoon by taking a book of my own and falling asleep over it, which might well be supposed to lessen my faith in the keenness of his critical powers for the day, but as his opinion of your poems agreed with mine, I take it as a judicious one.

'Aegrotus' and 'Before Sedan' certainly seem to be (as poems, not cherrystones) the gems of the book, but we both took a great fancy to the old gentleman and old lady.[1] 'Dorothy' also is a lovely little piece with not too much or too little said—though really your induction is not scientifically credible when you infer a whole woman and her whole life (for that is what it comes to) out of the fact of a name being scratched on a pane. The portrait so pleases and touches me, however, that, as I am not scientific, I forgive you for it.

That saying neither too much nor too little seems to be your particular gift, and it includes a power of always suggesting a thought just a little deeper than your words. I don't mean a thought one thinks oneself through a sequence of ideas, but one of which you are distinctly the author.

The remainder of the letter contains a criticism of the 'Drama of the Doctor's Window'.

[1] 'A Gentleman (and a Gentlewoman) of the Old School.'

The allusion above to 'cherry-stones' appears obscure at first sight, and I should have had no clue to it but for the fact that my attention was recently called to a book by Mr. E. F. Benson about his family. The author is describing a conversation between his father, the Archbishop, and Robert Browning, in the course of which the question of my father's poetry was raised. Apparently Browning thought little of lyrical poetry, and expressed the opinion that my father's verse was rather like 'carved cherrystones'. Until I saw this anecdote in Mr. Benson's book, I was not aware that its application to my father had been made public before, but, from the letter above, the remark was evidently current at the time.

The next letter of importance is one addressed by Lord Lytton to Anthony Trollope, who evidently gave it to my father to keep. It is dated Paris, 19 May 1874, and reads:

> I am most grateful to you for the kind gift of *Vignettes in Rhyme*. Forgive me, if in spite of what you told me of the book, I have read it with pleasant surprise. If I were not writing to-night *late* on the eve of my departure for England at 5 a.m. to-morrow morning, and very tired, I should inflict upon you a long and detailed account of my impressions. But this let me say at least—and at once. I think there is in this little book a new, genuine and delightful individuality in verse not only of great promise but also of

such indisputable accomplishment that it is a shame—either to our critical press, or to myself—that it was not made known to me before you kindly introduced me to it.

The man who wrote this book must be a *man*—and not merely a verse machine. To me at least it has been most refreshing, and very delightfully so, to find the spontaneous lyric note, in company with *true* sentiment, and observation of, and sympathy with, human type, as well as wholly free from the damnable affectation and grimace of our modern bards.

I think there is here a genuine spring of pure running water, *immediately* distinguishable from all the hydraulic spoutings which, for a while, pass for improvements on the old Castalian.

I shall hope and expect more of it. But if the writer writes no more than he has written already, he will have done excellent work.

Among others whose attention was attracted by *Vignettes in Rhyme* was Edmund Yates, who on 4 August 1874 wrote:

I should be very glad if you could occasionally let me have some Society verses for publication in the *World*. They should be à propos of the season of the year, or some subject of the day.

It would, however, appear that this suggestion was never carried into effect.

There is no doubt that *Vignettes in Rhyme* met with a very warm reception at the hands of the public. The reviews were so uniformly good

that one wonders how a book like this would have sold under present-day circumstances, when there are such vast opportunities for advertising and broadcasting. Apparently by 1875 *Vignettes in Rhyme* had penetrated to America, for on 17 April 1875, Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote as follows:

> If I should tell you how much pleasure your little volume of poems has given me by summing up in one epithet all the various exclamations of delight with which I finished one poem after another, you would be startled with my superlatives.
>
> I did—what you and I do not always do—I read every poem in the little book, for after reading the first I found I was dealing with a *maestro* who touched his slender instrument with the rarest grace, finish and feeling. It would be hard to find more perfect poems of their kind, and their kind is perhaps something higher than the modest title you have given them would lead the reader to suppose. I will not criticize them severally, for though I might select my favourites—and I hardly know which I would choose at this moment—they are so uniformly admirable in their different ways that I should probably end by thinking the last one I read was the best. Take the two first as pictures; take the 'Virtuoso' for its exquisite and most delicate satire; take the tender sentiment of the 'Sundial' with its shadowy suggestiveness—any one of these (and I do not know how many more) seems to me, I will not say perfect, because perfection is not human, and these poems are deliciously human, but too nearly perfect for me to find fault with.
>
> I remember reading the 'Sundial' reprinted somewhere

and being very much impressed by it, not knowing its authorship.

Do let me say too that I love verses written as a gentleman should write, whether the gentleman was called Horatius Flaccus or by an English name. The 'odi ignobile' is the one sacrifice to Christianity which comes hardest to me.

There are two or three small coincidences in your book with published poems of mine which rather pleased. I have 'vignettes' as a title in my volume of poems; one poem called 'A*vis*,' beginning 'I may not *rightly call thy name*'; another entitled 'Dorothy Q' (to a portrait of my great-grandmother as a girl, Dorothy Quincey). I am hoping to publish a new edition of my poems in the course of the year, and I shall be happy to send you a copy. In the meantime I will send you my last little volume.

The next letter is from the American poet Edmund Clarence Stedman, who continued to write regularly right up to the date of his death more than twenty years later. Mr. Stedman may be said to have been my father's principal advocate in America in those early days, for it was he who wrote an introductory appreciation in the American edition of *Vignettes in Rhyme* published in America in 1880. The letter is headed Century Club, New York, 19 July 1875, and reads as follows:

On returning from my voyage to the tropics I find that I have to thank you for a double pleasure: for most kind words with respect to my verse, from one whom a down-

east yankee would call 'a judge of the article'—and for a copy of *Vignettes in Rhyme*, the gift of the Author's own hand. With the book I was the more pleased since it enabled me to present my own copy obtained and read months previously to a friend, who also lives in Arcady and reads your lyrics with most dainty and appreciative zest. There is such a difference between the society-verse of a rhymester and that of a poet! and, indeed, I have not often felt, of late, how little that difference is, until I tasted and enjoyed the sweet waters of poetry that flowed from the undercurrent of even your lightest verse. A fact cannot have too much stimulus of application—you know that Landor said there was something of summer even in the noise of insects—and I only affirm the fact that your readers here are select and *not* few, in hope that to know it may be as agreeable to you as it is to me; and I am especially glad of it, as it speaks so well for the good taste of my own land.

On my return I was at once so overtasked with the galley, Preface, and proof sheets of my own forthcoming book (Victorian Poets) that I have been unable until this moment to acknowledge your note to Mr. Johnson and your gift to myself.

J. R. Osgood & Son of Boston, and Chatto & Windus, London, will bring out the prose volume in the autumn. And now will you not accept from the author a collected edition of verse, containing, as it chances, the stanzas which have been so fortunate as already to meet your attention? It is a very poor exchange for your *Vignettes*. Some of the earlier pieces in the book, written in 'very young youth', are only retained because they gained a certain popularity in America, and I cannot wholly suppress them. Among the lighter and later pieces there are some which are akin to

the Wall Street idyll, and which I am less ashamed to place in your hands; such as 'The Doorstep', 'Toujours Amour', 'Edged Tools', 'Peter Stuyvesant's New Year's Call', 'Jean Provence', and a translation 'Hypatia', &c., and if these waifs tempt you to any exploration of the graver portion of the book, I shall be more fortunate than I deserve and much delighted.

I am not surprised that the grace, lightness, and pathos of your lyrics and idylls have so soon carried them to a new edition. Let me close by saying that the too brief reference made to them and their Author, in my forthcoming book, was written and in type before the reception of your note, and hence was an unprejudiced expression of my estimate. I am sure it is but the beginning of many longer plaudits which your future work will gain for you at home and abroad.

The next two letters both deal with the same subject, 'The Prayer of the Swine to Circe' suggested by the picture by Briton Riviere, R.A. The first is from Frederick Locker, and is dated 3 October 1875:

Thanks for thinking of me and for sending me *Good Words*. I have read the 'Swine' with exceeding pleasure: it was a very difficult subject, perhaps the most difficult you have attempted, and I think it is a success. I am sure your friends will tell you this. You are extremely happy in your epithets, and the story is very well rendered. I suppose 'lyne' is to be justified, but if you could introduce one or two more such words near it, it would be less of a spot than it is, but that is only a passing opinion—in stanza 5 would it improve the sense if 'or' was introduced before 'any'?

I hope you are busy and writing and planning new poems. Do not be discouraged. I say this as I am always looking out for your name in the mags, and do not see it.... When you have time will you send me back to Chesham Street or Athenaeum Club that copy of L.L.[1] *with all yr emendations.* I doubt if I shall be in London (to stay) much before Xmas. I hope you and yours prosper.

The second letter, dated 3 November 1875, is from William Riviere, the Royal Academician's father:

I have only just read your admirable 'The Prayer of the Swine to Circe' in *Good Words*, and was very much struck by its beauty. I sent it to my son Briton Riviere (to whom you pay so kind a compliment). He writes to me 'I am greatly pleased with the poem. I think it illustrates and explains the subject more completely than anything else that has been written about it, and contains some very fine lines in it'. Please to excuse my having taken the liberty of writing to you, but knowing that the life and soul of the 'twin sisters', art and literature, are nourished by appreciation, and heartfelt sympathy, I beg of you to accept my thanks as the father of Mr. Briton Riviere.

'The Prayer of the Swine to Circe' has been the subject of frequent and generous praise, and yet it is perhaps a noteworthy fact that my father had, so far as I am aware, never read Homer in the original Greek.

[1] Presumably the writer's *London Lyrics*.

One of the earliest letters from Alfred Austin is dated 21 November 1875:

I have to thank you for a very kind note, and likewise for the pleasure your volume of Vers de Société gave me, some little time ago. Pray make any use of the lines in the *Spectator* you please. I seized the opportunity—for which likewise I have to thank you—of once more intimating that the *vates sacer* writes for wise men, pretty women and himself, and does not care a couplet what the rabble of readers and critics think of him. I am sure the sentiment is yours no less than mine.

Anthony Trollope, to whom I remember you dedicated your book, spoke of you to me one day, so as he is a dear friend of mine, I indulge a hope that we may possibly meet under his roof.

The next letter relates apparently to the first poem to appear in the *Cornhill* in August 1876—namely, 'The Child Musician'. It is from Sir Leslie Stephen, and is dated 22 February 1876:

I have sent your poem to the press and like it very much.

If you will permit me to offer a criticism I would suggest that there is something rather imperfect in the last stanza. Not being a poet myself, I cannot say what, and still less can I suggest any improvement; but I fancy that you might by some trifling change of language bring out the point a little more distinctly.

After so long an interval I am unable to say what the flaw in question was, but I may mention that my father was not very proud of 'The Child

Musician', and it was only the popularity which the constant demand for its inclusion in anthologies revealed that forced him to reprint it in the various editions of his *Collected Poems*.

The next document I find for the year 1876 arrived apparently with no covering letter. It was a poem from Sir Edmund Gosse which, with his permission, I print in full for the first time. But it must be understood that it is but a playful effort and belongs to the time when he and my father were experimenting in all the forms of exotic verse described by Théodore de Banville in his *Petit Traité*. The date of posting was 18 March 1876.

To Austin Dobson.

Pantoum.

April comes with birds and flowers,
  Orchards waken into bloom;
April gives us sun and showers,—
  Dobson gives us—a pantoum.

Orchards waken into bloom,
  Stir, and quicken out of sleep;
Dobson gives us a pantoum
  Where the flagging verses creep.

Stir and quicken out of sleep,
  Dusty Dobson, quibbling bard!
Where the flagging verses creep,
  Writing, reading, both are hard.

Dusty Dobson, quibbling bard,
  Hide in your own pot-pourri!
Writing, reading, both are hard,
  One for you,—and one for me!

Hide in your own pot-pourri,
  Let two mandarins unscrew,
One for you and one for me.
  I'm a dusty bard like you.

Let two mandarins unscrew,
  China beauties, fit for us!
I'm a dusty bard like you,
  Let us both be buried thus.

China beauties, fit for us,
  Porcelain let our tomb-stone be;
Let us both be buried thus
  In a grave of pot-pourri.

Porcelain let our tomb-stone be;
  Wound and muffled, head and feet,
In that grave of pot-pourri
  You shall have your winding-sheet.

Wound and muffled, head and feet,
  You may wait the crack of doom;
You shall have your winding-sheet,
  Buried in your own pantoum.

The next letter, dated 21 April 1876, from J. Leicester Warren (afterwards Lord de Tabley), apparently refers to a gift of *Vignettes in Rhyme*, third edition, which had appeared in 1875:

Your charming gift followed your note this morning. I am going to read it leisurely before I see you, but I have just

chanced now on the 'Legacy', whose complete success (to my mind) shows how unnecessary my Horatian Lecture of the other night was. Also on the 'Death of Procris', which convinces me that it only remains with yourself to diverge into 'pastures new' poetical whenever you choose. Still you are thoroughly wise to have chosen a vein in which you are complete master and which has been so comparatively unworked out. I know of course some dozen of the pieces in your index from reviews, but I quite see even at a glance that I had no idea of the exquisite finish of your work *in extenso*. I will write to or speak with you more in detail hereafter. Meantime, I send you 'Rehearsals',[1] which needs no acknowledgement till we meet. I have not got a 'Soldier'[2] left, and I am rather glad of it, for I cannot doubt that it is long and tedious. I hope however that in my earlier attempt you may find a line or two to like. . . .

The following letter from William Bell Scott, the poet and artist, dated 13 May 1876, refers to the same volume:

My dear Dobson,—May I use this familiar friendly form of address—to say how much I am grateful to you for your volume? Seeing Third Edition on the title-page raises my envy, and immediately makes me a prejudiced critic, but in spite of that, and after only reading the first poem, 'Une Marquise,' and one or two shorter pieces towards the end, I must say nothing has given me so fresh a sensation, and so strong a sense of the complete realization of the intention, as you have done. For my part I have all my life suffered under an incubus of seriousness, an old man of the sea in

[1] Published in 1873.

[2] *A Soldier of Fortune*, published in 1876.

funeral attire, howling out a lugubrious chant about his bottle being empty, so that I look with surprise and great pleasure on the productions of men entirely free. We may talk over this matter and the point of view indicated some day, meantime many thanks for your book. . . .'

Vignettes in Rhyme, third edition, had also gone to America, for the following is an acknowledgement from Thomas Bailey Aldrich, the American poet, and is apparently his first letter to my father. It is dated 30 March 1877:

Please accept my thanks for your friendly note and your volume of gracious poems. The book followed the note at an interval of several days, which will account for my delay in acknowledging your favour. I am sensible of the value of both—the kindness of the one and the art of the other. Though you should like my verses twice as well as you say, I should consider myself still in your debt for 'The Story of Rosina', 'The Dead Letter', and 'The Death of Procris'. These seem to me the finest expression of the three *moods* which I find in the *Vignettes*.

My *recueil* of verses was printed before I learned that Mr. Locker had also translated the fifth lyric of Gautier's *Fantaisies d'Hiver*. I was amused to observe how we both fought shy of Gautier's last quatrain. Mr Locker's paraphrase is so much better than mine, that I shall suppress 'A Winter Piece' when I come to make a formal collection of my poems.

I mail with this a copy of 'Flower and Thorn' which I beg you to accept with the assurance of my best wishes for your success and happiness.

The next letter of any importance is one dated

9 May 1877, from Alexander Japp, the then editor of *Good Words* and the *Sunday Magazine*. I am not sure to what poem it refers, but I quote the following extract: 'I shall preserve the anonymous. But would not "Walter Bryce" do? If not, perhaps you will suggest some signature, when the proofs are sent.' In the short introduction which I wrote for an anthology [1] of my father's works in 1922, I referred to the fact, which was apparently quite unknown, even to Mr. Francis E. Murray, who was responsible for the admirable Austin Dobson Bibliography, published in 1900, that on certain occasions my father signed his poems 'Walter Bryce'—I could never quite understand why; and the allusion in this letter appears to indicate that Mr. Japp was the author of the name, but why he should have chosen 'Walter Bryce' is wrapt in mystery.

In 1877 the author published his second volume of poems under the title *Proverbs in Porcelain*, and it is to this volume that the following letter, dated 28 May 1877, from Frederick Locker (to whom the volume was dedicated), would appear to refer:

> Tennyson was much pleased to receive your volume and he admits the, shall I call it *generosity* which prompted you

[1] *An Austin Dobson Anthology—Prose and Verse*, with a foreword by Sir Edmund Gosse. Oxford University Press.

to say that he need not acknowledge. He thinks the dedication very graceful, and quite appreciates, as I do, the honour conferred. We got out your other vol. and I made him read 'Avice' aloud to us, and he spoke of your gift of metre. I am obliged to return to London to-morrow, but I thought I would tell you this. I see no notices of your book in this week's Papers. My brother tells me he has written to you.

On 29 May 1877 Sir Lewis Morris wrote as follows about the same book:

Thank you very much for your book which I was very glad to get, more so than I have sometimes been in other cases. Many of your poems are old friends and all of them which I have seen I like, while in 'Circe', which I think I remember seeing before, you rise to heights which when you are tired of *vers de société* I am sure you will scale with as much success as has hitherto attended your exercises on the lower slopes of Parnassus. I shall read the whole of the book with great pleasure, and I am certain it will have the success which I already see it deserves. If a good word from a humble individual can do any good it shall be spoken.

Anthony Trollope also wrote on 19 May 1877:

I got your book last night and read much of it with the pleasure I always have in your poetry,—a delight in the undercurrent of fine feeling which is supposed to be subservient to the rhythmical prettinesses, but which is the basis on which they are in truth supported. *Vers de Société* are for me unalluring unless I can sympathize with the feeling, and find a pathos even in those which are nearest to the burlesque. It is because that touch is never wanting to you that I always think that you will surely be known sooner or later as a master in your art.

But I can still feel, though I have no longer the right to point out, the passages in which a little more 'elbow grease' would have perhaps served your purpose.

. . . . . .

It is almost needless to mention the fact that my father was greatly attracted by the French verse-forms, and he is usually credited with having been the first writer to have used them extensively, and certainly one of the comparatively few who did so with any measure of success. It is not therefore surprising that his poetical efforts generally should have caused some interest among his brother poets across the Channel. For this reason I do not feel that the following letter from Théodore de Banville, dated 12 August 1877, is out of place:

MONSIEUR ET CHER POËTE,

Laissez-moi vous serrer la main, comme à un confrère et comme à un frère! Que d'originalité, que de lyrisme, que de fantaisie dans vos *Proverbs in Porcelain*, et comme s'unissent admirablement chez vous l'amour du beau antique et la plus vivante modernité. J'aurais dû vous adresser bien plus tôt mes remerciements et mes félicitations, mais j'ai été absent de Paris, et c'est seulement à mon retour que j'ai trouvé votre merveilleux livre. Puis il m'a fallu le secours d'un ami pour pouvoir le lire *réellement*, car hélas! j'ai eu autrefois un peu d'anglais, mais ce peu, si insuffisant, je l'ai encore oublié. C'est là, Monsieur, un de mes plus grands chagrins, et je rougis de nous et de moi surtout, en ce moment où les poëtes anglais adoptent si victorieuse-

ment quelques-uns de nos anciens rhythmes. Oui, La Ballade, Le Rondeau, Le Rondel, Le Triolet, La Villanelle vous appartiennent maintenant autant qu'à nous, et je suis très fier si j'ai pu être une des causes occasionnelles de cette communion, que ni les guerres ni la politique ne sauraient détruire. Quelle belle révolution, et vivement menée. Il n'y a eu ni tâtonnements, ni hésitation, ni efforts stériles, et du premier coup vous êtes entré dans l'intimité de Charles d'Orléans, de Ronsard et de Voiture. Pour moi, c'est bien le cas de répéter le vieux proverbe:—'Les amis de nos amis sont nos amis,' car en honorant mes maîtres chéris, ne m'avez-vous pas donné le droit de vous aimer? Ce droit, je compte en user toujours, en applaudissant de loin à vos efforts et à vos triomphes, et aussi en vous portant mon serrement de main le plus cordial, quand il me sera possible d'aller à Londres, que je n'ai pas vu depuis bien longtemps. En attendant un moment désiré, recevez encore, Monsieur et cher poëte, mes éloges les plus sincères, et croyez que je suis avec la plus vive sympathie votre très dévoué

THÉODORE DE BANVILLE.

From a letter received by my father nearly forty years later from an American correspondent, it is evident that this very volume, inscribed *Au Roi des Rimes*, found its way ultimately across the Atlantic.

The last letter which I quote for 1877 was from Longfellow, and is dated 17 September 1877:

I have had the pleasure of receiving your friendly note and the two volumes of poems, *Proverbs in Porcelain* and

Vignettes in Rhyme, and hasten to thank you for your kind words, and for your very welcome gift.

I find the volumes extremely entertaining and agreeable; everything drawn with a light touch 'in easy rhyme, and phrases neatly fitting'. Whenever I read in them, I am put into a pleasant and cheerful mood of mind.

So I thank you very cordially. . . .

The year 1878 opened with a characteristically long letter from Edmund Clarence Stedman, which I reproduce in full, as this contemporary poet was a critic who was far from content with a mere superficial treatment of the object of his criticism. The letter is dated 16 January 1878:

The least one can do for a true poet, and the best thing one can do for one's self, is to buy that poet's volumes. This is a belief by which I long have guided my practice. And if ever I receive a gift copy in addition, then I bestow my 'boughten' (old English, current in Yankee-land) copy upon one of the elect among my choicest friends. So you may be sure that I did not suspend my rules in anticipation of receiving from you a copy of your new edition. *Proverbs in Porcelain* passed from the bookseller's table to my own soon after the earliest copies reached this city; and I have taken it up so often that I doubt if there is in it a bit of sèvres, dresden, spode, or majolica, with which I am not tolerably familiar. To my taste, the dialogues—so new, so fragile, so lightly and firmly tinted—are exquisite. I can well understand your fear that the British mind will not at once comprehend them—especially the mind of the Philistine Briton. Yet, if they become the mode, the Philistine

Briton will do his best; and be proud of his claim to comprehend them. I think that 'Goodnight, Babette!' possibly from its pathos, is my favourite among these six pieces. The *Rondels* and *Rondeaux*, of course, are the matter next of interest to any modern poet and have a curious charm for my ear. (Quite a number of them, I think, have reached me through the newspapers. Our journals are wont to copy dainty things from your magazines. Only to-night I have cut your 'Ballad of Prose & Rhyme' as you see from the *N.Y. Times*.) These experiments in the old French manner greatly enrich our English thesaurus, and you manage them delightfully, no one so well. But, after all, I believe you are best when unfettered, when singing, more smoothly than any of your lyric-idyllic notes, directly from your own throat and heart. In the lines 'To a Greek Girl' and 'A Song of the Four Seasons' I find your essential self—the poet who so delighted me with 'A Dead Letter', 'An Autumn Idyll', 'Tu Quoque', and others of your lyrics which I first read. The Rondels are finely adapted for preludes and endings: nothing could be better than 'When Finis comes'. But I am quite sure that you are either too timid or too modest in your hesitation to essay a long poem in some measure like that of 'Polypheme'—which it is evident you can carry as long as you choose. If you could get hold of a purely English tale; time that of Dolly Varden pattens; scene, on the upper Thames, quality, humour and pathos blended; atmosphere, *your own*; you would make of it something very fine. Not too many foreign words. Tone it to the English ear, and please that ear with a finesse made perfect by your French studies—without that ear's suspecting it. After all, this is a very vague suggestion. Speaking of the 'Autumn Idyll'; you

will be amused by this indubitable parody,[1] or plagiarism, of Harte's—whose originality is confined to his prose. In verse he is a freebooter, only caring to get his magazine-pay, and ready to lay hands upon the Ark, if need be. He has a wonderful knack, though, of catching the point of a thing, and I do wish he would settle down and do his best work. Do you care to read a bit of an attempt at billowy blank-verse? 'Tis my share of the Whittier tribute, on the old prophet's seventieth birthday. He is a mixture of Burns and Elijah, if you can conceive of such a personage. Your friend Mr. Japp has done me a good turn in the *Nonconformist*, for which I am grateful, as I hope, ere long, to offer an English edition of *selected* poems to my *transatlantic friends*.

Another letter, from Sir Leslie Stephen, dated 9 February 1878, runs:

A love of curés or of the genus to which they belong is not (I must confess) my ruling passion; but I like your curé and hope that he will soon make his bow to the readers of the *Cornhill*. Touch him up, if you please, when he is in type: I have nothing more to say than that I am glad to hear from you again.

'The Curé's Progress'—the poem referred to—appealed to many people, more especially perhaps to members of the Roman Catholic Church, and it was pleasant to see the appreciations which appeared in Catholic papers at the time of the poet's death. There is one before me that reads:

The death of Austin Dobson robs the country of a sincere, graceful, almost fastidious poet. Mr. Dobson knew

[1] This enclosure is missing.

his limitations, and never claimed any powers as a great poet. He contented himself with a delicate, gentle vein that was the delight of a quiet hour snatched from the humdrum of office work. As the antithesis of the grotesque and unorthodox that masquerades as art, Mr. Dobson gave us refreshment, and we hasten to pay our tribute to one who, though not a Catholic, was admired by Catholics; who had a gift for song and used it well.

My father's correspondence with W. E. Henley was very voluminous and engaging, and I shall have opportunity later to afford further examples of it. In the meantime I quote the following letter—apparently the first—as it touches upon the attempt of various writers of the time to adopt the various French forms of versification. The letter is dated 28 February 1878, and reads:

Mr. Lang has sent me your letter. You will, I am sure, excuse me if I take advantage of the sort of opening it gives me of replying to it personally. I have known and admired your work so long that I feel as tho' I had a real acquaintance with you.

I am sorry that I should have been so perverse as to have done a Ballade à double refrain before you. Unfortunately, however, in an evil hour I listened to Clement Marot, and rushed upon my fate. I really do regret it very much, because (as I have often had occasion to write before) I think very highly of the 'Ballade of Prose & Rhyme'. I can only console myself for my indiscretion by looking upon your Ballade as the dawn, and mine as that darkest hour which is supposed to precede it.

Let me thank you (as Acting Editor) for your very kindly notice of the verse that has appeared in *London*.

On 16 April 1878, Arthur O'Shaughnessy writes from the British Museum:

I thank you most sincerely for having so cordially responded to my wish, which my friend Gosse has kindly communicated to you. I had long hoped to exchange books with you and mentioned it to several of your friends, but had not the good fortune to see you myself; I now send 'Music and Moonlight', and I shall delight to think that you will live for a little while in my dream world, as I shall in your own.

VI

LETTERS FROM HIS FRIENDS (*cont.*)
1878–1884.

THE year 1878 saw the appearance of a second edition of *Proverbs in Porcelain*, a somewhat scarce volume, on account of the fact that a fire at the publisher's destroyed a large portion of the edition. The reception of a copy by T. B. Aldrich, the American poet, moved him to write at length on 26 April 1878:

I have been absent from home the last three weeks. On returning yesterday I found your *Proverbs in Porcelain*: I do not know how long the book has been waiting for its welcome. I hastened to read it, and hasten now to tell you how charming I find it all. Those miniature comedies which occupy the first thirty pages are exquisite, with their freshness and delicacy and scholarly flavour; and I do not see how anything of the kind can come nearer perfection than 'The Idyll of the Carp'. That and the lyric on page 78[1]—very touching it is—seem to me the choicest poems in the collection. The whole volume is worthy of its beautiful typography. By the way, why do you write *chalet* with the circumflex accent? English and American printers *always* put in that accent; but it is incorrect. You will not find *châlet* in any French author, poet or lexicographer. If you can, I shall owe an abject apology to *my*

[1] 'The Cradle'.

printer, who, on a recent occasion, was so sure of himself that he corrected my corrections and caused me to say *châlet* throughout *The Queen of Sheba*. Speaking of my novelette, our journals here are making merry over a slip—decided tumble indeed—of one of Mr. Tennyson's 'indolent reviewers'. I enclose you two of the laughs[1] which a correspondent has just sent me. It is fortunate for New England authors that they are not obliged to depend on *The Saturday Review* or English criticism generally for appreciation. With very few exceptions, it is only our fourth-rate writers who make popular successes in England —Artemus Ward, Joaquin Miller, &c. Can you explain it?—men who are not successes in their own land. In point of critical penetration I think America sets England an example. We take none but England's best. Of course there is a market in this country for those litters of blind novels of which England seems so prolific; but the English authors who rank highest in Boston and New York are the men and women who rank highest in London and Edinburgh. Pray believe me, I am not making a personal protest, though I have all the air of doing so; I claim nothing whatever for myself, but I claim everything in the way of recognition for the conscientious and severe literary art which has a home in the United States. Now that Sainte-Beuve is dead, who can write so delightfully about *French Poets and Novelists* as Henry James, Jr.? (Macmillan & Co.) How admirable, though in a lesser degree, is Mr. Stedman's *Victorian Poets*—which work, by the by, illustrates what

[1] These were cuttings containing a reference to a *Saturday Review* critic who had described Mr. Aldrich's *Queen of Sheba*, a prose work, as 'not worse than the average of contemporary poetry'.

I have said touching American appreciation of English writers. The book was the outgrowth of the popular catholic sentiment. Mr. Stedman could not have produced those Essays in a different atmosphere any more than he could grow palm trees at the North Pole. They were not the result of his individual tastes and studies; they were mostly due to the rare intellectual air which is to be breathed in literary circles here. We have ten or twenty men who are scarcely heard of in England but who are a thousand times superior to the Millers and the Wards that have found favour there. Mr. Howells, the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, is almost wholly unknown across the water; when the English critics speak of him—as has chanced once or twice—they misspell his name. Yet Mr. Howells is master of a prose style so fine and pure and luminous that, speaking of it merely as *style*, it can be justly praised only at the expense of every other man who writes English. Please read his *Venetian Life*, *A Chance Acquaintance*, and *A Foregone Conclusion* if you think me extravagant. He has not Hawthorne's depth, but he has more than Hawthorne's finish. He ought to occupy in English esteem the place which was given to Washington Irving who was nothing else than an imitation of Goldsmith and the earlier English essayists. That coals should be imported in Newcastle! Let me send you over ten or twelve American Tennysons!—years ago I might have sent myself with the lot. Or shall it be one of our female Swinburnes?

> What is it ails me that I should sing of her?
> The Queen of the flashes and flames that were!
> Yea, I have felt the shuddering sting of her,
> The flower-sweet throat and the hands of her!

'God bless us every one!' said Tiny Tim.

Now, my dear Mr. Dobson, if I have not succeeded in tiring you I have succeeded in tiring myself, and, what is worse, have left unsaid all that I wished to say. You were very kind to add that paragraph about the little violinist;[1] but it was not necessary. Your poem was thoroughly original, and stood in no need of explanation. The snapping of the violin string in the darkness is a touch of real pathos.

In your note long ago you asked me if your poems were known in this country outside of that narrow circle of readers who are familiar with all English books. It gives me great pleasure to be able to say that your lyrics when they appear in the magazines are always extensively quoted by our best newspapers, just as Mr. Locker's are. I have been trying to induce Messrs Roberts Bros. (the Boston publishers of Wm. Morris, the Rossettis, Swinburne, Hamerton, Ingelow, &c.) to reprint your two volumes, or at least such a selection from the *Vignettes* and the *Proverbs* as would be adapted to the American market. I say *induce*, because it is neither agreeable nor profitable to reprint a volume and have some disreputable publisher put forth a cheaper edition the instant one's venture looks like a success. Then at present the book-trade with us is stagnant—as it must also be in England, with the war-cloud hanging over all. However, I hope to arrange the matter for you by and by, if you will permit me.

Can you not send me a short original lyric—one of those comedies, if you please—for a volume of original anonymous poems ('No Name Poems') which Roberts Bros. are to publish this summer or autumn? Several of our best poets have contributed poems, and on your side Jean

[1] The allusion is to the poem 'The Child Musician'.

Ingelow, the two Rossettis, Morris, Swinburne, Marston, Marzials, and I know not whom. Roberts Bros. pay magazine prices for contributions, and I am certain they would be delighted to get one of your graceful lyrics. If I were acquainted with Mr. Locker I would apply to him. The book—with which, *en passant*, I have nothing to do; Mr. G. P. Lathrop, a son-in-law of Hawthorne, is the editor—will probably attract a good deal of attention. It belongs to a series of volumes[1] which have met with large sales because they were all excellent and *anonymous*.

Please pardon this rambling letter.

I do not think that this interesting letter needs any elucidation or comment beyond mention of the fact that (as already indicated in the previous chapter) it was not until 1880 that my father's first volume of poems, *Vignettes in Rhyme* (with an introduction by Edmund Clarence Stedman) appeared in America. It was followed in 1885 by *At the Sign of the Lyre*, but neither of these volumes were quite the same, in their contents, as their English counterparts.

I have already alluded to 'The Curé's Progress'. It was evidently being quoted here and there,

[1] As a PS.: 'They set every one to guessing as to their authorship and so won many more readers than they would probably have gained with the writers' names on the title-page. It was a very shrewd experiment; but would have failed anywhere but in a nation of *guessers*.'

for on 2 May 1878, Oliver Wendell Holmes writes:

About a month ago I found in one of our Boston papers a little poem entitled 'The Curé's Progress'. It was signed 'Austin Dobson' and it reminded me how much pleasure I had had from other poems of yours, recalling as it did very forcibly, their grace, their charming liveliness, all that made those other poems so attractive. I must have told you the great pleasure I received from them. I could not get the Curé's Progress out of my head, and I had been talking about it ever since I read it—two or three days, that is—when your volume came with the kindly autograph on a blank leaf which gives it a special value.

I should have thanked you before this, but I determined not to do it until I had read every poem in the book, and I happened to be very busy at the time I received it.

Well, now I have read them all, and I can only repeat what I have already said about the other poems. We all have our fancies, and I like 'The Ballad of Beau Brocade' as well as any of those of its class. You study the ways of the time you are writing about and reproduce them after a very natural fashion. I can see there is more *work* in your little volume—work, whether done expressly for the poems or not—than some of your readers will suspect.

Do not think that while I am amused by your playful verse, I overlook the true poetical character of the exquisitely finished 'Case of Cameos' or the Spenser-like 'Prayer of the Swine to Circe'. I saw at the Philadelphia Exposition the wonderful picture which must, I think, have suggested your fine poem.

And now let me thank you most heartily for the little volume of delightful verse, and for your autograph message

which comes with it. I had one of the kindest of letters the other day, too, from your friend Mr. Locker. O if I could set my foot once more on the dear soil of England from which so many even affectionate words have reached me.'

A copy of *Proverbs in Porcelain* evidently went to C. S. Calverley, who sends a brief acknowledgement dated 13 May 1878.

I have been out of Town, as I hope you concluded, and consequently have only just got your book and letter for both of which I thank you much. It was most kind of you to send me the book and I am sure that reading it will be a great pleasure to me— I hope to devote myself to its study this evening, aided by a pipe.'

Proverbs in Porcelain also drew from W. E. Henley a further letter (dated 31 May 1878) in the correspondence which continued for so many years:

I have read thro' *Proverbs in Porcelain* with a very great deal of pleasure. I am not sure (you will forgive my saying so) that I think your alterations always happy; but of course you know better far than I what is right and what is wrong. I think the 'Ballade of the Armada' quite unimpeachable as it stands; but tho' I like the Bandusian fount, I confess to a regret for that which it has replaced.

You told me that in all probability you would end by suppressing the rondels, with a single exception. And, if you will allow me to say so, I think that you will be wise in doing so.

Please do not forget your promise and when you have a minute to spare, for charity bestow it on me. I am at the

office from noon till an uncertain term of the night, on Wednesdays; and always on Thursday mornings.

I was very glad indeed to find that you had read my hospital verses. I wish I could think you would ever read the second set. But they have been rejected by every editor in the civilized world.

I am afraid you'll not like it if I tell you that the first verses I ever got into print were imitated as to their cadence from your own 'Marquise'.

The years 1879, 1880, and 1881 apparently only produced one or two letters of sufficient interest to warrant their being placed in the bound volumes to which an earlier reference has been made.

The only one in 1879 which I quote is from the French poet Joseph Boulmier, who wrote on 1 January 1879:

Mon cher Confrère, Acceptez, je vous prie, à l'occasion de l'année nouvelle, les vœux ardents que je forme pour votre bonheur. Courtisez la muse Villanelle avec le même succès que par le passé, sans faire tort cependant aux autres Muses dont vous êtes l'amant heureux, et au milieu de ce charmant sérail ménagez une toute petite place au souvenir de votre humble émule, qui ne sera jamais pour vous un rival bien sérieux, mais qui, en revanche, restera toujours votre ami sincère et dévoué.

PS.—J'ai un nouveau volume en train, *cent* Villanelles inédites. Ce sera pour le printemps prochain, au retour des hirondelles. Après quoi, je crois qu'il sera bon de m'en tenir là et de passer, comme on dit chez nous, à un autre genre d'exercices.

J'ai hâte, mon cher Confrère, de voir ce nouveau-né sortir de la presse, assez viable et assez bien portant pour que je puisse vous en faire hommage.

The only letter of note in 1880 is one from Prof. E. H. Palmer, the eminent Oriental scholar, in which he favourably criticizes 'A Persian Apologue', which was, in its final form, dedicated to him. In 1881 there is a short letter from Kate Greenaway (the first, apparently, of many), whose work my father so much admired, and with whom he collaborated on several occasions.

On 8 October 1881 Randolph Caldecott, *à propos* of an illustration for an edition of *Selected Eighteenth Century Essays* which my father was editing, writes:

I have just sent away your book and I feel better for its sojourn with me—I hope I have not kept it long enough to inconvenience you.

No, I do not particularly wish the cut printed in sepia. What you desire had better be done.

I forgot to suggest the name of J. D. Cooper, of 188, Strand, as an engraver; but if the drawing is already in hand I wish no notice to be taken of this suggestion.

As to the original drawing, it is always well to tell the people into whose hands it goes to keep it clean and return it to somebody when the engraving is produced. If you tell them to return it to you and if you then care to keep it, I shall be very pleased to know that it reposes in your house and shall feel complimented in its possessor.

I need only add that this original drawing was one of my father's most cherished possessions.

The year 1882 opens with a letter, dated 5 February, from Viscount Morley, in which he asks my father to undertake the life of Henry Fielding in the 'English Men of Letters' Series, of which he was the editor. 'I shall think myself very fortunate', he writes, 'if I succeed in procuring your collaboration.'

I may mention that the fee suggested was £100, to include all rights, the length not to exceed 180 pages. The *Life* appeared in 1883, and was subsequently revised in 1907. Reprints of that edition still continue to make their appearance, the latest bearing the date 1925.

In the latter part of 1882 there is a very characteristic letter from Edwin A. Abbey the painter, written from the Swan Inn, Lechlade, Gloucestershire, and dated 24 September 1882.

I have had it on my mind for the last three weeks to write you—saying how very much delighted I am with the preface—I never do write when I ought to—but I hope it is not too late to thank you for taking so much kindly interest in my fragmentary and desultory efforts to realize on paper what I have felt after reading the dear old man's lines.

I have for a long time had in mind—in a vague way—the idea of illustrating what would have been the *events* of a quiet life in an English country-town or village sixty

years ago. I have made one drawing (which is not quite engraved yet—or you should have a proof of it) of a street—in the background in front of the post office and inn—are people bustling about the road—boxes and bags, and children, old ladies and other confusing things about. In the foreground is a young girl who has just received a letter with startling news of some sort—I don't know what. She has it crumpled in her hand which is pressed to her bosom. I spent a long time on the drawing—which I began with the idea of making it a water-colour.

I spent so many weeks in this quiet little place—both in this year and last—that—on rainy days and at other idle times—I have gradually got up the greatest interest in the various small goings on of the neighbours—whom I don't know—nor don't expect to know—

In—for instance—the two elderly maiden ladies who live over the way in a great wide double house of the Georgian era—and in the poor soul next door who has so many small children—a sort of rural Mrs. Jellyby—the younger ones each being looked after by the next eldest but one. Then there are two pretty girls in black—who keep a little shop—with a sitting room out of it for their invalided and widowed mother. I imagine it all as it must have been sixty years ago—before there was a village reading room and church coffee-house—and before there was a railway station and before they built a big school house with Gothic windows and roof—behind the church-yard and before they restored the church—otherwise it must have been much the same. The large house facing its own garden across the road had just the same sort of big brass door-plate with 'Surgeon' on its front door—except that the surgeon himself probably wore a curlier brim to his hat—and a

'spencer' with shiny buttons instead of an ulster. There were the same loose-legged big-pawed foxhound puppies hanging about the butcher's shop—and I daresay the cobbler was the same oracle in his own circle that he is now. If you were here I could show you fifty little things—which I can't write—because I have already written more than you will have patience to try to decipher—probably—and because I'm very clumsy at word painting anyway—I wonder if you will be interested enough in the subject matter to weave a simple story of a town of this sort—at that time—and whether you will let me fit some pictures to it—and publish both first in *Harper's Magazine*—and afterwards in a little book.

I have purposely avoided making any more pictures or thinking of any subjects—so that I might be free in my mind to illustrate whatever might be written. The drawing I have made suggested the series.

I have written to the Harpers and they are very much pleased with the scheme—and hope you will undertake to supply the brains necessary to carry it out. If I could see you instead of writing all this—I think I could explain my idea better.

It is only a vague vapoury sort of notion—purposely so—for as I have said above I should rather follow than lead. Perhaps too—you know a better village than this is (you can't know a quieter) for the purpose. Will you kindly let me hear from you? I don't know how much you know of the domestic life of the period—outside of what one reads in the fiction of the time. I daresay you know as much as I do if not more. I have quantities of wearing apparel &c.—of about that date—which is always an interesting thing to an artist—and if you think favourably of the notion I shall

leave no stone unturned in laying bare the root of *that* matter.

A facsimile of part of this letter facing p. 115 shows a delightful little sketch intended to give an idea of the drawing to which the artist refers. The sketch is detailed enough to point to the finished production which appeared in *Harper's Magazine* a year later (November 1883), as an illustration to a poem by my father entitled 'At Last', a title which was afterwards changed to 'Verses to Order', showing clearly that Abbey's drawing had suggested the poem.

The rest of the letter deals with an idea which obviously took shape in the volume which appeared some seven years later entitled *The Quiet Life*—certain verses by various hands: 'the motive set forth in a Prologue and Epilogue by Austin Dobson; the whole adorned with numerous drawings by Edwin A. Abbey and Alfred Parsons.'

The year 1883 also saw the publication of *Old-World Idylls*, as to which W. E. Henley wrote on 9 October 1883:

> Your book, dear poet, is a good book. Believe me, much of it will live to give pleasure to poets yet unborn. And all of it, to us of to-day, is good and sweet. Truly you haven't lived and wrought in vain.
>
> I sigh a little, as I turn the pages, and feel the good thought, the well-united verse, the happy and graceful

rhymes. I should have liked to be a poet, too. And you know what I am. All your cautions shall be obeyed. A caution in return:—pack up your sends a little less elaborately for post; for in opening, the precious volume got torn —a little torn, though 'twas my wife who did me the work.

I hope to have it for review, but I am not sure yet.

A copy of *Old-World Idylls*—in fact, one of the scarce large-paper copies—evidently went to Edwin Abbey, whose growing correspondence with my father continued now and then to be enriched with a lightning sketch. On 20 October 1883 he wrote from Redditch:

Your very kind letter came to me yesterday—and I am delighted with the idea of having a large paper copy of your book. I have been hoping to see you here—as Parsons thought you might give me a look up. Don't you think you can still manage it? If you care for a walk—we are thinking of walking across over the hills through Broadway to Lechlade—about forty-five miles—on Friday or Saturday—and should be very pleased if you will join us.

Yesterday we went to Worcester to see Prinsep who is painting a large picture there—and fell into a veritable gold mine of an old book shop. I bought a beautiful set of the Idle Apprentice in excellent condition for 12/-! We got altogether some fifteen or twenty volumes—among others for half a crown a beautifully illustrated edition of Bloomfield's Rural Tales, Ballads and Songs—1805—I should think the cuts (?) were Stothard's. Beattie's Minstrel a beautiful copy 1805—*crushed levant* same price—a copy of Lord Byron's suppressed verses on his family affairs &c. —one shilling—Bell's Spenser (1778) sixpence a vol.—a

very beautiful little Goldsmith—Essays Poems and Plays—1810—1/6—and half a dozen other desirable things—a Prior 1733 fifth ed. and an original Gay's Fables 1750—1/6!

We hadn't time to go through the entire shop—but I intend to take time and do so—before I leave this neighbourhood.

I only write all this to make you feel badly.

I've settled on 'Phillada'—as a companion to 'Sally'—but have not yet anything to go with the Pope affair.

Next week I'm thinking of going to Ludlow in Herefordshire to get some backgrounds to *She Stoops*—I wonder if you would care to go with me? It's not a case of 'Bee! bee! O come and play with me' this time—I dread going down there all alone.

It's very good of you to send the list of 'Epig'—for the Valentine drawing—Parsons will do the outlying framework—And I'm very anxious to know what I am to do for your vignette——

And then in a postscript he adds:

In case you should tell Gosse of our 'Book finds'—I inquired particularly for Restoration Dramas on his acct, but the old gentleman had none. There were some later volumes of plays (or volumes of later plays) containing *High Life below Stairs* and other plays of that period.

The allusion to 'Phillada' [*sic*] is to one of the two black-and-white water-colour drawings which he did as illustrations to 'The Ladies of St. James's' for *Harper's Magazine*. The original always hung in my father's study.

Towards the end of 1883 James Russell Lowell wrote:

I send you my first (& last) *rondeau* to make you feel more contented with your own. Pardon the unliquified ll in *Charmille* to the exigence of English rhyme.

If my verses (which have so put me out of breath) do no other good, they will at least have further persuaded me of the easy mastery of yours.

A postscript is added: 'Had I time to brood a little and take counsel with the *esprit d'escalier* (cleverest of imps) my verses might have changed for the better, but the feeling that dictated them would have remained the same.'

The verses appended to the letter I reproduce in full:

In a copy of Austin Dobson's

Old-World Idylls.

At length arrived, your book I take
To read in for the author's sake;
Too old for fresh sensations grown,
What charm to Art or nature known
This torpor from my nerves can shake?

Hush! my parched ears what runnels slake?
Is a thrush gurgling from the brake?
Is Spring, on all the breezes blown,
At length arrived?

Long may you live such songs to make
And I to listen while you wake,

With art too long disused, each tone
Of the *Lesboum barbiton*,
At mastery, through long finger-ache,
At length arrived!

As I read on, what changes steal
O'er me and through, from head to heel?
A rapier thrusts my skirt aside,
My rough tweeds bloom to silken pride,—
Who was it laughed? Your hand, Dick Steele!

Down vistas long of clipt *Charmille*
Watteau as Pierrot leads the reel;
Tabor and pipe the dancers guide,
As I read on.

While in and out the verses wheel,
The wind-caught robes trim feet reveal,
Lithe ankles that to music glide,
But chastely and by chance descried,—
Art? Nature? Which do I most feel
As I read on?

14th November, 1883, On the evening of my return from France.

It appears that G. H. Boughton, R.A., was also a recipient of *Old-World Idylls*, and he was also lucky enough to get one of the few large-paper copies, which so rarely appear in the pages of booksellers' catalogues. On 20 February 1884 he wrote as follows:

I don't think I ever had a more delightful surprise than the 'coming in upon me' of the much coveted large paper copy of the *Old-World Idylls* late last evening.

I had been busy all day or I should have written to Bain of the Haymarket about that very volume. You have so delightfully forestalled that excellent bookseller. *He* could not have sent me the real author's gift with its golden ring of Song set with a little jewel of a presentation verse—all to myself!—not he!—nor anybody else except your own kind self. Therefore do I thank you out of the depths of my most sincere gratitude. Among your many *real* admirers I don't think you would easily find one more warmly appreciative than myself of your doubly graceful *gifts*. The word must serve me for both meanings although I did not intend a pun.

I hope to see you and to thank you personally for your good and happy thought of me.

I reproduce the last two letters consecutively as they deal with the same subject, but just prior to the receipt of the latter came a short note from Mr. George Saintsbury, dated 23 January 1884, which I quote as it was a very early letter from that lifelong friend who has been responsible for some of the pleasantest criticisms of my father's work. 'Would you care to review Courthope's Addison for the S.R.?[1] We are doing what we can to get everything done by the best men possible and in this case I need not say that the best man possible lives at Porth-y-felin, Ealing, England.'

[1] The *Saturday Review*.

The next letter worth recording is one from Alfred Parsons, the artist. It is dated 6 July 1884:

I do like the 'June Rose' Rondeau, very much indeed, and am delighted to get a chance of doing something to go with your work—I should like to do a page to go opposite it and to smother the poem in roses—I will put in a sketch of my notion—If you do not care which has it I should prefer it to go to America—my roses would be so much better engraved over there—Will you arrange this? I would draw the heading and the initial letter; do you really mean to add the sub-heading (and to A.P.)? I was the other day talking with Ned[1] about the text of *She Stoops*. I have a title page designed, but before finishing it want to be certain about the exact words—The usual ones are 'She stoops to conquer or the Mistakes of a Night, A Comedy' and I imagine these must be the words on the original title page—Thank you so much for sending me the poem.

This refers to the poem 'To a June Rose', which appeared in *Harper's Magazine* for June 1885, illustrated by the writer of the letter. The original black-and-white drawing which breathes the veritable atmosphere of Broadway in Worcestershire was presented to my father by the artist.

The next letter, dated 28 September (1884),

[1] Evidently the late E. A. Abbey, R.A., who, with Alfred Parsons, illustrated the sumptuous edition of *She stoops to conquer* produced in 1888.

appears to be a very early one from Andrew Lang. It reads:

I like B. M.'s article on you particularly. Why has he always pretended to know nothing about poetry? I don't agree with Aldrich that you leave Suckling and Herrick at the post, but that may be mere envy and jealousy on my part. I'm glad Matthews selected the 'Song of IV Seasons', if I had to choose only one of your pieces that would be the one I think. Probably you don't think so, and prefer Circe and the Swine! We come south in ten days. I've only had a middling holiday, and *no* fishing. I hope you are well, and all the piccaninnies. I've been trying to do some bits of Greek poetry into sonnets; sonnets of all sizes. A holiday task. . . .

The letter refers to an article on 'Austin Dobson' contributed to the *Century Magazine*, by his friend Brander Matthews, the American author. It appeared in October 1884, and was illustrated by a portrait reproduced from a black-and-white oil painting by the late G. F. Watts.

I conclude the year 1884 with two other characteristic letters. From the first, one from G. H. Boughton, R.A., dated 22 November 1884, I only quote a portion:

Fancy you doing me the honour to repeat the very charming versified 'spurt' to my lagging pencil—just because therein lurked a slight difference with stupid old 'Lindley'! Never mind—I am the gainer all the same. And I thank you *and* the slip. I met Gosse the other night at the

AUSTIN DOBSON IN 1884

From an oil-painting by G. F. Watts

Tademas—and he was full of warm admiration of your delightful tribute to my dilatoriness. I think it *lovely*. Too good for the likes of *me*. . . .

My father dedicated several poems to this artist, but as the latter had promised him a drawing for the poem 'Love in Winter', which he (Boughton) much admired, I suspect the 'versified spurt' referred to is that which I venture to reproduce in full. It was never included in the various collections of poems published in my father's lifetime, but as soon as I discovered it, it was at once included in the *Complete Poetical Works* appearing in 1923.

The Spring has come, but Ah! Will she?—
The girl that Boughton promised me?—
My Bella, who he said should go
In fitting tint across the snow!
Yet why, forsooth, shall I complain,
Since this my loss is others' gain;—
Since BOUGHTON, even now, perhaps,
Is painting frows in Friesland caps;
Or puts, may be, the final touch
To some fresh Lovelace in Low Dutch;
Or else he makes the world more rich
By still one more New-England witch;
Or sees upon his canvas grow
Some priestess crowned with mistletoe.
Then, by and by, the crowd will rush
To praise these fruits of Boughton's brush,
And bless the artist who can blend
Unfading beauty with Ostend;

Or trace immortal truth behind
The furrowed face of human kind.
So why (I say) should I complain
Since this my loss is others' gain!
And yet, and yet, I fain would see
That girl that Boughton promised me!

When this poem first reached the artist, he replied in kind, in characteristic style:

Procrastination is the thief of Time
And mine is worse.
It steals from Dobson most delightful verse
And filches from his Muse a 'plaint sublime,
Instead of just an 'ordinary' curse.

I know I've lingered on the snowy way
With 'Bella' fair,
Her mantle fluttering in the frosty air,
And still I'd linger 'till we both grow grey;
If such delightful scoldings come, I'll say
'I don't much care'.

Following the lines, the artist wrote:

My dear long suffering Dobson. This is a base attempt to fob you off with a spurious imitation of your own bright coin—I throw up the sponge and own my wickedness (when in doubt, speak the truth). The 'Bella' is partly done (in colour). I thought it came so well that I would paint a large picture of it—keeping the small one as a 'motive'—You are not forgotten. I went in to get a large paper copy of the Bewick the other day—all sold out—so I bought a small one....

The water-colour which formed the subject of

the above correspondence did not actually arrive until June 1885, and was then accompanied by another poetical effusion on the part of the artist. I quote it here, although on account of its date it belongs more properly to a later chapter. The letter is dated 3 June 1885, and runs:

> The Spring has come at last, And She
> 'The girl that Boughton promised me'!
> I will not let the spring go by
> And summer come, and yet not try
> To show you 'twas not *all* a lie,
> The little Girl I promised thee!

My dear Dobson,

You will not soon again have to do with a painter before you are pretty certain that he is not an abandoned scribbler of empty verses as well. The little girl is not the same little maid[1] of the book. I found it made the face too small for my style of colour so I made her a 'three-quarter' picture—I did not give her a 'mount' as I don't know how you frame your things. A gilt mount would do well, if it goes with your idea.

The last letter which I quote for the year 1884 is one from my father's lifelong friend Sir Edmund Gosse, and is only another example of a vast and entertaining correspondence which lasted up to

[1] This refers to the pen-and-ink drawing of the same subject, drawn in the author's own copy of *At the Sign of the Lyre*, and reproduced here.

my father's death. It is written from Boston, U.S.A., where the writer was on a visit.

This is Tuesday. We arrived, after a beastly but rapid passage, on Saturday afternoon, and I telegraphed to you at once. Quite a crowd of friends came down to Castle Garden to meet us,—Gilder, Roswell Smith, the Stedmans, Fraser and Johnson, at different times during the day, but all missed us except Mrs. Lawrence Barrett, who brought us up town in her carriage and saved us all bother. We went to Hotel Dam, opposite Gilder's house, close to Union Square. The Gilders immediately carried us off to spend the evening with them. They meant the first evening to be perfectly tête-à-tête, but people kept calling at the hotel and were sent over—the Stedmans, Nadal, Miss Clara Kellogg, the other Gilders, &c. and, what was very funny, the interviewers from the various newspapers, not such people as we know of, but reporters who stood on the doormat and wrote answers to questions in a little note-book, with their billy-cocks under their arms. Then came in a card from the Century Club, informing me of honorary membership, and Stedman and Gilder took me in there, where I had a longish talk with Stoddard. I shall have so much to tell you. You are tremendously popular here, I did not in the least know how popular. Some of our would-be geniuses are scarcely known by name. Well, all that on the first evening, as we came worn and ghastly from the steamer.

On Sunday Gilder took us all round New York. We bought the Sunday papers to see what the interviewers would say. Tell Bateman that the *Herald* announces that I have 'dull gold hair and a most modest and retiring manner'. I think he will recognize the latter. We dined with the Roswell Smiths, and then Gilder took me to the Quartette

Club, which meets for stringed music on Sunday afternoons at the studio of Augustus St. Gaudens, the sculptor, and there I met Kenyon Cox, Will Low, and various artists. In the evening people came in to Gilder's to meet us.

Yesterday morning I spent at the 'Century' Office, where you are regarded as a sort of Deity, and made the acquaintance of Johnson, Scott, Buol, Drake and in fact all the staff except Mrs. Dodge, who is ill. Then we came on here, six hours' express, and were met at the station by Howells. He tells me that when the bureau of the Lowell Institute was opened every ticket, over 600, was taken within 25 minutes, and when Dr. O. W. Holmes came at the half hour they could not oblige him with any seat whatever, so I have had the happiness of sending round to him one of those retained for ourselves. The event comes off this evening, and I am not a little agitated at the thought of facing an audience so critical and so favourably predisposed.

This is the country to come to, my dear. We are really read and known here to an extent I never dreamed of. I will let you know how the first lecture goes off.

This interesting letter needs, I think, no comment, and the persons referred to are well known in the annals of American literature at the end of the last century. But across the corner of the letter is the injunction 'Please read this to A. E. B.' that distinguished Sir Alfred Bateman, K.C.M.G., mentioned in the letter, who has so rich a fund of anecdotes of the old days at the Board of Trade when he and my father laboured together.

VII

LETTERS FROM HIS FRIENDS. (*cont.*)

1885–1893.

These to his Memory. May the Age arriving
As Ours recall
That bravest heart, that gay and gallant striving,
That laurelled pall!
Blithe and rare spirit! we who later linger
By bleaker seas,
Sigh for the touch of the Magician's finger,—
His golden keys.

NO collection of letters from the writers of the period with which this chapter deals would be complete without the inclusion of one from Robert Louis Stevenson, of whom the above *In Memoriam* lines were written by my father in 1901. The letter which I am about to quote has of course already appeared among the published letters of R.L.S. It is undated, but with his usual care my father has preserved the envelope, which is dated 26 February 1885.

Set down my delay to your own fault; I wished to acknowledge such a gift from you in some of my inapt and slovenly rhymes; but you should have sent me your pen and not your desk. The verses stand up to the axles in a miry cross road, whence the coursers of the sun shall never draw them; hence I am constrained to this uncourtliness,

that I must appear before one of the Kings of that country of rhyme without my singing robes. For less than this, if we may trust the book of Esther, favourites have tasted death; but I conceive the Kingdom of the Muses mildlier mannered; and in particular that country which you administer and which I seem to see as half suburban land; a land of hollyhocks and country houses; a land where at night, in thorny and sequestered by-paths, you will meet masqueraders going to a ball in their sedans, and the rector steering homeward by the light of his lantern; a land of the windmill, and the west wind, and the flowering hawthorn with a little scented letter in the hollow of its trunk, and the kites flying over all in the season of kites, and the far away blue spires of a cathedral city. Will you forgive me, then, for my delay and accept my thanks not only for your present, but for the letter which followed it, and which perhaps I more particularly value, and believe me to be with much admiration. . . .

So apt a pen-picture calls for no comment, but I need hardly say how much my father admired the work of R.L.S., and who does not?

As indicated elsewhere, the year 1885 saw the appearance of the volume of poems entitled *At the Sign of the Lyre*, first in America, and later, in a somewhat varied form, in England. On 15 March 1885, E. C. Stedman, to whom the volume was dedicated with some prefatory lines, wrote:

The first tap *At the Sign of the Lyre* was drawn for *me*, and on the day before the public opening,—by which you

readily will conceive that on the 13th instant, an advance copy of your book was sent to me, and that yesterday the *vulgus nobile aut ignobile* had their common chance to test your brew. And you have given me a delightful surprise, not an inkling of your intent had reached me,—in fact, I have not learned who has overlooked (if anybody) your proofs, or otherwise helped the book through the press. The sudden titillation which my nerves of *feeling* experienced as I read your votive inscription, was—as I promptly wrote Holt[1]—almost the first pleasant sensation I have had, during a season of prolonged trouble, anxiety and overwork. It was, indeed, a thrill of pleasure,—excited by a sense of your fidelity to an early friend, and equally by a sense of the honour done me by this open expression of it. An honour it will be justly esteemed, by readers young or old, and there is no other living poet whose reputation and friendship combined could enable him to give me quite so much satisfaction as I find in the verses with which you consign your 'pinnace'.

Not that I was, through any need of yours, the Palinurus of your first voyage. I was merely the conventional harbour-pilot[2] of a craft for which there was a wide channel and a welcoming port. And, after all, the greatest favour you have done me is that you have gone on from year to year, a *poet* to the end as you were at the outset, and constantly adding to the laurels which I had the common sense to acknowledge were your due.

[1] The publisher of the volume in question.

[2] Mr. Stedman is here alluding to the fact that he provided a Preface for the American edition of *Vignettes in Rhyme*, the first volume of Austin Dobson's verses to appear in America.

I will not delay this letter a single day, and so have little to say of the book itself. I see that the *arrangement* is capital and that I am acquainted with very many of the poems. Am glad you begin with Phyllida[1] who alone would 'carry' the book if it bore the name of an unknown poet. By the way, you are the first to revive in your *Carmina Votiva* the Horatian usage of inscribing verse, not *directly* personal, to a friend who is *generally* associated with the theme. There is an antique grace in the practice. The Burbadge rondeau is one of the best. My wife sends her love and is even more touched than I am. You are a dear good fellow, Dobson, and 'not unmindful'.

As the prefatory lines to which the writer refers were not reprinted in Austin Dobson's *Complete Poetical Works*, I venture to reproduce them here:

> No need to-day that we commend
> This pinnace to your care, O Friend!
> You steered the bark that went before
> Between the whirlpool and the shore;
> So,—though we want no pilot now,—
> We write your name upon the prow.

Mr. Stedman's wonder as to who had overlooked the proofs is answered by the following extract from a letter from Brander Matthews, dated 20 January 1885:

I have read about 96 pp. proof of *At the Sign of the Lyre* and so has Bunner.[2] We are doing our best to get it absolutely 'follow copy'. I have read and re-read 'Phillida, My

[1] The poem entitled 'The Ladies of St. James's'.

[2] H. C. Bunner.

Phillida',[1] and 'Hey Dolly'[2] with increased delight. You never did anything better.

Mr. Brander Matthews was one of my father's oldest friends and admirers on the other side of the Atlantic, and the correspondence between the two men continued uninterrupted right up to the date of my father's death.

The next letter I quote, is one of many from Col. F. C. Grant, and apparently refers to the English edition of *At the Sign of the Lyre*, which had evidently made its appearance by the date of this letter, 12 October 1885:

I really am most grateful to you for your welcome volume of poems. I have been reading them this afternoon. Some of them of course are old friends but I was glad to see them again, and many of the new ones I like very much. The poems are a curious combination of true poetic spirit and an exquisite neatness—set off sometimes with much grace and felicity of language. I shall value the Vol. 'The Two Sermons' of course brought to my mind the lines of Longfellow:

> Long was the old man's sermon,
> But it seemed not long to me,
> For he spoke of Ruth the beautiful,
> And then I thought of thee.

There is not really much resemblance. . . .

Oh! how pleased I was to get home this afternoon and see my friends.

[1] 'The Ladies of St. James's.' [2] 'The Milkmaid.'

'TWO SERMONS'

By Edwin A. Abbey

The 10,000 Greeks were not more delighted when they saw the blue sea—The Israelites were not more joyful when they got to the promised land than was I when I saw my armchair and my books.

The above letter also contained a somewhat paraphrased quotation from Tennyson, which reminds me that my father was always very much flattered by the Laureate's opinions on his verse, conveyed to him by Frederick Locker. I was not, however, aware that the two had ever met, until Sir Edmund Gosse read to me two years ago, from one of his notebooks, an account of a dinner at the house of Lord de Tabley, then Mr. J. Leicester Warren, where he himself, Tennyson, and my father were all present.

As practically all the letters I have so far quoted have dealt with my father's poetry, I am constrained to include the next—from Sir Leslie Stephen, because, by way of a change, it deals with a prose work, *Selections from Steele*, which my father edited for the Clarendon Press. It is dated 16 October 1885:

I received with great pleasure your volume of Steele; and am still more pleased to hear of your approaching volume. I always wanted to find a good account of Steele; and Forster, somehow, always rubs me the wrong way. Do you know Mr. Dykes Campbell who printed Addison's rough copy of Spectators? He told me a little time ago that

some one[1] had been spending a good deal of time upon Steele. The some one was certainly not you, but you probably know who it was. If you don't, it might be worth while to ask Mr. C.

I shall be curious to see your account of the Addison row. When I read the papers the other day, there seemed to be some unpleasant allusions which I did not understand, which would account for some of the bitterness.

In the next letter from Sir Edmund Gosse, dated 17 October 1885, we return to *At the Sign of the Lyre*:

I have been beguiled for a whole immoral hour into reading your book. You are a wonderful magician, and though I know almost everything by heart, the same spell has caught me, and I don't know in what strange little world of sandalwood, where the china figures have beating hearts and the pot-pourri is wet with real tears, it is that I have been living. Your art, your perfect mastery and skill, are an ever-growing wonder to me; and I think, if we miss something of the surprise of your first freshness, there is in these latest tales and fables something higher and rarer, a complete originality in resuscitation, the absolute newness of such utter oldness, that outvalues it.

Your verses to me in the beginning of this copy are lovely, thank you so much. Before you get this I shall have gone off to Windsor, and by Monday you will have forgotten what follows: so I will say (in flying like one of your own abbés or petits maîtres) how great a treasure your old and lasting friendship is to me, the stimulus

[1] Possibly this was that other biographer of Steele, the late G. A. Aitken.

ever pointing me onwards, the sympathy ever helping me forwards.

I find on reference to that beautiful privately printed catalogue of a portion of Sir Edmund Gosse's library appearing in 1893, and again to the fuller volume compiled by Mr. E. H. M. Cox in 1924, that the copy of the book referred to in this letter was one of the rare seventy-five large-paper copies. I say 'rare' because I had to wait many years before I myself procured a copy for my extensive Austin Dobson collection. Of its companion volume, *Old-World Idylls*, issued in 1883 (of which there were only fifty large-paper copies), I procured a copy recently (1926) after waiting patiently for twenty years.

The inscription verses to which this letter alludes were included in the poet's *Complete Poetical Works*, but I quote them here as an example of an art of which I think my father was a master in no small degree:

To E. W. G.

'Book against book', 'Agreed', I said:
But 'twas the truck of Diomed!
—And yet, in Fairy-land, I'm told
Dead Leaves—as these—will turn to gold.
Take them, Sir Alchemist, and see!
Nothing transmutes like sympathy.

For the next twelve months I find nothing that need be recorded in full. A request by Lady Rosebery for some verses seems to have met with a ready response. Mr. George Saintsbury writes about a translation which I cannot locate. Alfred Austin deals at length and in most friendly fashion with *At the Sign of the Lyre*, and Sir Leslie Stephen claims that his summer holiday was made all the pleasanter by the *Life of Steele*, which appeared in 1886.

On 16 November 1886, Coventry Patmore wrote: 'I am much gratified to learn that my poems have found such acceptance with you. There is no one living who knows better than you do what good work of that sort means. The public cannot see that "easy reading's sometimes — hard writing".'

The last letter of 1886 (dated 31 December) is one from Sir Sidney Lee:

> I esteem very highly your kindness in sending me the volume of your poems which reached me to-day. I have been one of your public for a long time, which I flatter myself is the same thing as saying that I enjoy the good things of this life, and have often regretted that your volumes of poetry were not more numerous than they are. But to re-read a portion of your poems in a volume presented by the poet and bearing his autograph is a delight now in store for me and will, I fully expect, rival the charm of making a first acquaintance with your poetry. My regard for you

as a poet which is of some years' standing has been increased of late by my knowledge of the conscientious care which you unsparingly devote to your labours as a biographer.[1]

The only letter which I quote for the year 1887 strikes a rather new note. Practically all the letters quoted up to the present have dealt with my father's poetry or prose, and one may perhaps have forgotten, almost justifiably, that he was by profession a Civil Servant. In 1885 he attained the rank of Principal in the Marine Department of the Board of Trade. On 1 March 1887, the then President, Lord Stanley of Preston, wrote:

You must allow me to thank you, on behalf of the Department—for the most clear and able memorandum which you have been good enough to prepare for the Cabinet, on the subject of Pilotage certificates.

I know well how much labour and trouble it must have entailed upon you, and I am very much indebted to you for the clearness and impartiality with which you have placed the facts of the case before my colleagues and myself.

It is evident that the end of that year marked the beginning of a long and intermittent correspondence with the American book collector, Charles B. Foote, who was most generous in keeping my father supplied with the productions of the Grolier Club, apparently by way of return

[1] i.e. Austin Dobson's contributions to the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

for the volumes which my father sent him of his own as they came out. Early in 1926 I received a most interesting letter from Mr. Charles B. Foote's son in which he enclosed a list of no less than sixty-seven volumes (either wholly or partly by Austin Dobson), which had originally belonged to C. B. Foote and were now in his son's possession.

It appears that Mr. Foote's library was sold by auction in about 1895–6, during the owner's lifetime, but the Austin Dobson Collection was not included in the sale, and came into the possession of a book-collecting friend of the Foote family, whose extensive library was sold on his death in 1913. The sixty-seven Austin Dobson volumes, practically all first editions, and many of them containing inscriptions and autograph letters, were sold in one lot for $725, and thereafter passed into the possession of the son of the original owner. It would be interesting to know what sort of price they would fetch at the present time, when inscription copies are so eagerly sought after.

There is nothing much to record in 1888, until E. A. Abbey writes from Broadway in Worcestershire on 1 December 1888, apologizing for having disappointed my father about a set of drawings for the poem entitled the 'Noble Patron'.

The artist must evidently have changed his

mind later on, because in an undated letter, written subsequently, a ribald drawing of the chief character in the poem appears on the fourth page, and the poem was finally illustrated—nearly a year later—in *Harper's Magazine*.

Early in 1889 I find a short note from J. Ashby Sterry, but the envelope was addressed in a novel manner:

> To Austin Dobson, Bard, Esquire
> Who deftly twangs the graceful lyre,
> With wondrous taste & feeling:
> I trust this letter will arrive,
> Quite safe & sound at Seventy-five,
> In Eaton Rise, at Ealing!

Later I find a note from Joseph Pennell, inviting my father to sup with the Johnson Club at the Cheshire Cheese, when 'Birrell will read a paper and Birkbeck Hill is to talk'.

There are no other letters calling for particular comment in this year, but I must not pass on without recording the fact that in 1889 my father spent a most delightful week or so at Broadway among his painter friends, F. D. Millet, E. A. Abbey, and Alfred Parsons; and I remember the pride with which he used to say that he had arranged the ivy round the hanging lamp bracket in Millet's picture 'Between two fires'. I really

think that the stay at Broadway was one of the happiest events of my father's life.

The year 1890 saw the appearance of a very beautiful edition—produced in America—of *Horace Walpole, A Memoir*, but there is rather a dearth of letters of any particular interest in that year.

In 1891 Austin Dobson was elected a member of the Athenaeum by the Committee under Rule II, an event which had been previously prophesied by Lord Bowen in an undated letter which I have before me. The first letter of that year is one from Canon Alfred Ainger, who wrote on 23 March: 'Let me send you a word of warm welcome to the Athenaeum, where we shall, I hope, often meet. The Committee have done an excellent thing, and it will be universally appreciated.'

The next letter, dated 27 August 1891, relates to some verses which Sir William Watson wrote to my father in a copy of his 'Wordsworth's Grave'. These verses will be found in Chapter III, on my father's books (see p. 45). The letter runs:

You are very generous in appreciation of my little verses, whose only merit is in giving expression, however inadequate, to my admiration of your exquisite work—an admiration, fortunately, shared by too many to be any sort of credit to him who utters or feels it. I sent the lines to the *Spectator* and had a proof this afternoon, so they will

probably be in the next number. Would they were worthier of their theme!

Two more letters of 1891 deal with the *Life of William Hogarth*, which appeared in a revised and enlarged form in that year. Towards the end of the year I find a brief note from G. F. Watts, the painter, with regard to a photographic copy of 'Love and Death' which he presented to my father who subsequently gave it to me. Many years after, the artist paid a visit to Ealing, and brought with him a framed photograph of 'Good Luck to your Fishing', a theme upon which my father had written some lines which first appeared in the privately printed *Carmina Votiva* of 1900. That G. F. Watts admired my father's work may be gathered from the postscript to the above letter: 'I don't think my works can give you as much pleasure as yours give to me and my wife.'

In 1892 there appeared a collection of poems under the title *The Ballad of Beau Brocade and other Poems of the XVIIIth Century*, with delightful illustrations by Hugh Thomson, that life-long friend, who had already firmly established himself as a charming portrayer of eighteenth century life and manners.

I think I may safely say that the book was a great success, but how seriously the artist took the

matter of the illustrations (which were beautiful) is evident from the following letter (one of many) written from Seaford and dated 4 July:

I have received your very kind and forbearing note and feel so compunctious that I should make you so anxious. Since I came here I have not been engaged on anything else and the length of time occupied arises out of a seizure I sometimes have in which all ability to draw seems to leave me, so that nothing seems to come right. Nothing does seem to come right so far as distinction and charm are concerned, and one must *try* in these drawings for some faint breath of these qualities. Because I so felt my weakness, the first poem which I attacked was 'Beau Brocade' and I am now engaged on 'A Gentleman of the Old School'. If you only realized what the music of these lines and those of 'The Gentlewoman' and 'A Dead Letter' makes me feel you would understand the despairing sense of inability to suggest them. Please do not augur well from my misgivings. That makes me sorry that I told you of them.

'The Ladies of St. James's' and 'The Old Sedan Chair' were the two poems which you mentioned, should I not be able to make up the number with those already mentioned. One of these was put out of the list by your remembering that Mr. Abbey had illustrated it. I cannot remember which it was but there is so much in the four Poems that I do not believe either will be necessary.

I am devoting this week to getting the work I have done through and if you would prefer it I would take them up. Every Wednesday I can get up and down in the same day for a few shillings, and if you could see me in the middle of the day I should be so much obliged. I could then see the Process people and there should be no delay there if

AN ILLUSTRATION BY EDWIN A. ABBEY

For the 'Life of William Hogarth'

strong representation was made to them. My old people would be sure to do the work speedily and to our liking as they are so thoroughly acquainted with it now. However, I suppose Messrs. Kegan Paul have their own people for that work.

On Wednesday week then if that will be convenient for you I shall run up with as many drawings as I can get through. After that, I shall send them by dozens and half-dozens.

A little later in 1892 I find what must have been, I think, a very early communication from Thomas Hardy relating to a signed copy of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, which he had presented to my father. From the recently published *History of the Athenaeum*, I notice that Thomas Hardy and my father were elected members under Rule II on the same day, and they often met there.

On 2 November 1892, Alfred Austin, who must have received a copy of the *Ballad of Beau Brocade*, wrote:

I have been renewing, and extending my acquaintance with your polite and sociable Muse, and am confirmed in the partiality I have long felt for her. More and more I turn away from the performers who thump the lyre, on which you play with fine modulation. If I were to name all the pieces that linger with me, I should weary you. But let me single out, from the ones that are new to me, 'The Ballad of Prose and Rhyme'. That is the way to think, and that is the way to write. You see I avail myself of the privilege of friendship, to presume to praise.

In the same year appeared what was—if we except *Four Frenchwomen*—virtually the first of my father's volumes of eighteenth-century essays —there are now eleven volumes in all—*Eighteenth-Century Vignettes.*

Mr. Richard le Gallienne, on 16 November 1892, acknowledged a copy of the book in the following terms:

I am much indebted to you for your kindness in sending me your delightful *Vignettes.* I have not yet read all, but the book has been my companion since it came, and I have read more than enough to thank you for them most sincerely.

I think I am most touched by your picture of Fielding leaving Fordhook for the last time. I suppose it occurred in your 'Chiswick Press' edition of the *Journal*[1] but that I have not seen.

Gray's and Goldsmith's Library I, naturally, made for at once. One always loves you when you write about Goldsmith. 'Prior's Kitty,' 'A Garret in Gough Square' also especially charmed me, and you have given me a clearer view of Vauxhall than I ever had before.

But I will not further particularize, for, much as your essays delight me, there is something in your volume that delights me more than any one of them; at that I keep every now and then taking furtive peeps, to glow accordingly: I mean the inscription.

I believe I once naïvely confessed to you that it had been

[1] Fielding's *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon,* Chiswick Press, 1891.

one of my boyish dreams some day to know you: judge then how happy you make that 'boy' within me by so cherishable a gift as this copy of your book actually inscribed to me.

Let me not forget to thank you for your great kindness to my 'Wonder-Child'.

The same book drew the following letter, dated 18 November 1892, from Canon Ainger:

My best thanks for your kind thought of me. I shall read your alluring essays with real interest. I have not much leisure just now for *anything*—correspondence and business crowding on me, as I approach this change of occupation and residence that is before me—but which will not, I hope, cut me off from London altogether—for Cambridge is only an hour and a quarter distant. I wish they would make you Laureate—I cannot *say* whether you would be the right man in the right place—but *this* I know, that you alone among most of the possible candidates, would invest everything you wrote with 'charm'—and it is this and not merely 'style', that is the true 'anti-septic'.

I should so much like to give you one of my Lamb books—Which would you choose? If you have not the later edition of the Elia, may I send that?—for it contains many additions and corrections in the notes.

At the end of 1892 I find a small posse of letters from Sir Bernard Partridge, whose great admiration of my father's work ripened into his doing a charming set of illustrations for the edition of *Proverbs in Porcelain* which appeared in 1893.

How the partnership began is revealed in a letter dated 9 December 1892, which reads as follows:

I met Mr. Hugh Thomson last night, and talking with him of his illustrations to *Beau Brocade*, I heard—with as much surprise as pleasure—that you were anxious that I should illustrate some others of your poems—I think he specified those in the French manner. Before deciding to write to you, that there might be no mistake I made him repeat his statement solemnly and with circumstance; but he did not modify it: so that I now make bold to write and ask you to confirm it—or repudiate it without scruple if Thomson has bungled.

For there is no task I would more willingly set myself—or more reverently try to carry out. The names of many of the ballads occur at once, which I have always wanted to try my hand at: and if this news be true it would be a real pleasure—and so little illustration work is that—to be allowed to make the attempt. I hope you will let me know.

The last letter of 1892 which I quote is a brief one from Sir Walter Besant, to whom the second series of *Eighteenth Century Vignettes*, appearing in 1894, was dedicated:

Did I thank you for your gift of the new book? I am not certain, but I have since read the book and I venture to congratulate you upon it. I think it is in every way most charming. You have taken the scholars of the 18th century. I have written four novels upon the people of the 18th century. Their ways are not the ways of your scholars—but all are delightful. Never was there such a century.

On 12 March 1893, Henry Morley wrote:

Hearty thanks to you for the charming Edition of Fielding's *Voyage to Lisbon* and for the kind words that came with it. I had not seen the book and at once read your Preface and notes, with great interest. Your information about the two issues is specially valuable and your theory that the second was a product of the Lisbon earthquake doubtless right. I have lately treated myself to your little collection of *Eighteenth Century Vignettes* and to your *Ballad of Beau Brocade* in its delightful new edition with Hugh Thomson's illustrations. Long may you live and write. It is not often that a student of literature who voices the public ear excels alike in grace and knowledge, as you surely do. I send by parcel post with this an idle book of more than thirty years ago lately printed, a book I don't venture to send to any but near friends and those in whom I have faith that they possess one of the virtues of your 'Gentlewoman of the Old School' whose 'softest word was for the erring'.

As has already been observed above, the year 1890 was marked by the production in America of a very beautiful *Memoir of Horace Walpole*. A second edition appeared in 1893, concurrently in America and England. It is to this second edition that the following letter, from Sir Henry Lucy, dated 11 June 1893, relates:

Horace Walpole, at any time a pleasant writer, looked in on me yesterday at a peculiarly fortunate time. I was just leaving town for our cottage here (Hythe) by the sea where I find my only opportunity of reading a book. So I

brought the dainty volume with me, and have been reading it nearly all day with great delight.

It was very good of you to think of me. I shall always treasure the recollection and the book.

One of the earliest copies of *Proverbs in Porcelain*, mentioned above, seems to have gone to Mr. T. Anstey Guthrie, whose entertaining volumes of *Voces Populi* and *The Man from Blankley's* were also illustrated by the same artist. I always remember the joy with which my father received from the artist the original drawing of Mr. and Mrs. Ditchwater, from *The Man from Blankley's*, on the back of which, incidentally, was an incomplete trial drawing for one of the illustrations to the *Proverbs*.

Mr. Guthrie's letter is dated 16 November 1893, and reads:

I wish I could express all my gratitude to you for remembering your promise and sending me an early copy of your delightful *Proverbs in Porcelain*—with such an inscription—I am sure you know how keenly I enjoy and admire your work and how proud I am to possess this volume. I don't think our common friend Partridge has ever done anything so charming as the illustrations—but then he has never before had such an opportunity. With heartiest thanks and congratulations.

In spite of this well-deserved praise of the drawings, it is interesting to note, from a letter—

which I find among my father's—addressed by the artist to Cosmo Monkhouse, that Sir Bernard was by no means satisfied with his drawings, some of which he describes as 'entire failures'. Certainly my father never thought so. It would hardly, however, be right to leave this subject without quoting the opinion of Hugh Thomson, who, as has already been seen, first communicated to Bernard Partridge the intimation that my father would like him to illustrate some of his poems. The letter, which is undated, reads:

I have just received the beautiful book and before starting for town must write a line of warm thanks for your thought of me, and warm congratulations on the exquisite result of the combined labours of Partridge and yourself. I do not wonder at the intense satisfaction which you expressed about the illustrations. They are I should say about the most beautiful things barring Abbey which I have seen. I think it is a good sign for the success of the book with the public that Jessie[1] is charmed with the drawings both as illustrations of the text and as decorations.

. . . . . .

Proverbs in Porcelain appeared, of course, concurrently in America, and on Christmas Day, 1893, C. B. Foote wrote:

On Saturday last I called at Dodd Mead & Co., to get a

[1] Mrs. Hugh Thomson.

copy of *Proverbs in Porcelain* and was informed by Dodd that although the Christmas business is not up to the average of years past yet they could not complain. I asked about the success of *Proverbs in Porcelain* and was told that Sales were very satisfactory. I think had they been able to offer it a month earlier they might have taken many more orders. I hope it will prove profitable to you. It has rejoiced my heart exceedingly.

I hope you are making good headway with your catalogue. Print one hundred copies at least, that I may have fifteen for my friends here—I could get but ten from Gosse and in consequence there are many whose appeals I had to deny.

The allusion to a 'catalogue' is interesting. In 1893 the catalogue of a portion of Sir Edmund Gosse's Library, compiled by Mr. R. J. Lister, had appeared in a sumptuous form, and limited to sixty copies. No doubt this event tended to start an epidemic in library catalogues. At all events it is certain that my father entertained the idea, because I possess a trial page or two on quarto paper with certain entries from the projected catalogue actually set up in type. Why it was abandoned I do not know, but at the head of a similar page preserved in one of my father's scrap books are the words 'not proceeded with', a decision taken early in 1894.

Only one other letter in 1893 seems worth recording, one from Mr. Robert Bridges, the present

Poet Laureate. He wrote on 26 October 1893, regarding a book he had presented to my father:

Your not posting the letter, after you had written it, was a delightful finish to your concernments, which I should be grieved I had brought upon you without some encouragement. But did you not at Gosse's, say that you would like to have the book? and if so, that was also a sufficient reception. I am sure that you cannot really imagine that your delaying to acknowledge it when it came could make any difference.

A book on prosody[1] is no doubt a 'choke-pear' (whatever that may be. I use the word in confidence that you will understand it). I used to think that a 5 Act Drama was the best thing of that kind: now I can do better.

Still I hope that some of the 'Appendix' may interest you. Your apologies entail this pleasant occasion of writing to you. I hope that you enjoyed your holiday at Seaford, and are not too much worked now you are back again in town. I wish that I could give you some of my leisure, you would use it far better than I can.

I have been sorry to miss several articles concerning myself which my friends tell me have been drawn from the critics by Mr. Miles's book,[2] but I suppose that I have not lost anything very amusing. I am now publishing a new Comedy and some Lyrics in America.

[1] This volume was the writer's *Milton's Prosody*.

[2] *The Poets and the Poetry of the Century—Robert Bridges and contemporary Poets*, edited by Alfred H. Miles.

VIII

LETTERS FROM HIS FRIENDS (*cont.*)

1894–1902

THE year 1894 saw the publication of the second series of *Eighteenth Century Vignettes*, dedicated to Sir Walter Besant, who in a letter dated 28 February 1894 accepted the proposed dedication as 'the greatest honour possible from our sweetest poet'. He celebrated too the occasion of the publication of the book by sending my father one of the large-paper copies of it, really beautifully bound.

In a letter written early in 1895, he says that he consulted the great Tregaskis of Holborn as to the binding. 'I trust', he writes, 'you will like the appearance of your lovely book, in this garb. Beauty is all the more beautiful in flowered silk and satin petticoat.'

On 2 December 1894, I find a letter from my father's cousin Lord Rendel acknowledging a copy of this book:

I am very grateful. Your present is very handsome in itself but that is a small part of its value. I hope it gives you some pleasure to be able to give so much. The feeling that one has done something with one's life must be the best comfort of advancing years. We two, who began life some-

what together and are linked by many memories may I humbly hope enjoy alike without too much presumption something of this sort.

I shall set your book in the best and safest shelf of my Hatchlands Library.

There are few letters of special interest in the year 1895, but I must not pass that year by without mention of the production of a very beautiful two volume edition of my father's poems in America, with an etched portrait by William Strang and illustrations by the French etcher A. Lalauze. The edition comprised four different limited issues, two of which, of fifty copies in each case, were only obtainable in America.

The first letter in 1896 is from Alfred Austin, who after an interregnum of four years following the death of Lord Tennyson had just been made Laureate. The letter is dated 4 January 1896 and reads:

One of the earliest telegrams of congratulation I received was yours, and there is none I value more, not only because of your supreme mastery over verse, but because of that far higher gift, your generous temperament. I fancy we both would rather be 'gentlemen' in the universal sense of that word, and not poets, than be poets, and not 'gentlemen', and every gentleman is, like you, greatly magnanimous. I am sure it will interest you to know that the distinction assigned to me was none of my own seeking and that it came on me by *surprise*, on the last day of the year. I well

remember what you said to me at Hall Caine's. But I buried it in my heart, and I maintained a dogged silence not only to my brethren of the pen, but to my own kith and kin. And now that the laurel has been given me, I feel utterly undeserving of it and I do not envy the man who could bring himself to think that he merits it. So I regard myself only as a representative Peer—not even primus inter pares. . . .

The year 1896 saw the publication in a privately printed form of a poem entitled 'A Postscript to Dr. Goldsmith's Retaliation, being an epitaph on Samuel Johnson LL.D'. The poem which subsequently appeared in 1897 in *The Pageant* was 'read for the Author, by the Master of the Temple at the dinner of the "Johnson Society" in Pembroke College, Oxford, on the 22nd of June 1896'. On 16 July Sir John Murray writes to acknowledge a copy which my father had sent him.

W. J. Courthope was also the recipient of the 'Postcript', for in an undated letter he writes:

It is truly kind of you to have sent me your Postcript. I have read it with delight. You have put Johnson's merits into an exquisite poetical nutshell—a genuine feat of criticism. What indeed would he say to your 'prigs and slipshod romancers'? I should like to have heard the Master of the Temple reading your verses at the Pembroke dinner; but your beautiful copy of them will be a κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί. Many thanks.

If you have nothing better to do when the next 'Nineteenth Century' comes out look at the reprint of my last lecture there: I think you will sympathise with what is said in it.

By a letter dated (24 July 1896) from W. E. Henley I am reminded that he dedicated 'The Blackbird',—those beautiful lines beginning 'The Nightingale has a lyre of gold'—to my father. He had invited my father to choose the poem he liked best, and writes with regard to his choice. 'I am delighted, it is one of the best of them all; and if I may, I will put it under the protection of —not your initials, but—your full name.'

Later in the year the third series of *Eighteenth Century Vignettes* appeared, and one of the earliest recipients was Col. W. F. Prideaux (the bibliographer of R. L. Stevenson) who wrote on 19 October 1896:

I have to thank you most cordially for your kind letter and for the *Vignettes*, which will be placed on the shelf that holds my most valued possessions. Most of the papers are familiar to me, as I have read them in *Bibliographica* and *Longman*, and if my memory does not deceive me, I read the charming study on Covent Garden several years ago in the *English Illustrated*, but like a picture of Hogarth, every fresh examination brings out some new detail, without which one feels the portrait would be incomplete, and which must inevitably go to the true making of the man or the times, and I for one am never tired of such studies. They are my favourite 'Bedside Books'. I was rejoiced to

see no indication in the Prologue of a rumour which I have noticed in the newspapers that this Series was to be 'the last of its clan'—No, we cannot yet release you from the duty of providing these delightful pictures of the 'teacup times of hood and hoop, and while the patch was worn', with which you have bewitched me.

Col. Prideaux was of course a great collector, but I had no idea of the size of his Austin Dobson collection until I studied the sale catalogue of his books when they came to be dispersed at Sotheby's in 1916. He possessed quite a large number of my father's rarest items, including the privately printed pamphlet dealing with the *Drama of the Doctor's Window* which he described in a note as 'by far the rarest of Mr. Dobson's productions'. This particular item was withdrawn from the sale by the executor at the request of my father who purchased it to prevent it getting on to the open market. How a copy came into Col. Prideaux's possession is unknown.

Sir Henry Craik also received a copy of *Eighteenth Century Vignettes*, Third Series, and on 25 October 1896 wrote:

I did not at once write to thank you for your kind present of the 3rd series of Vignettes because I hate those speedy and meaningless acknowledgements which are written before one has made acquaintance with the book. I have now spent many very pleasant hours over the vignettes and the

only words with which I disagree are those too modest ones in the Introductory Epistle. Many of your essays are of far more real weight and importance than you ascribe to them, and almost every page gives one something to think over. The Essay on Fielding and Thackeray's flippant criticism is admirable, and I know no appreciation so good as yours of Prior. The discovery you tell of on p. 103 is a most happy one and I know no one now writing who can convey so much literary knowledge with such ease and grace as you.

These are not words of conventional praise. The book is one which it is delightful to linger over and I promise myself many more pleasant evenings with it. I value the gift very highly.

One of my father's most faithful correspondents was Pastor Theodore Monod of Paris. My father had first met him at Trèmel in Brittany at a Protestant guest house in which our family spent a summer holiday in, I think, the year 1894 or 1895. M. Monod, who was equally at home in English as in his native tongue, is best known perhaps in this country by his authorship of that striking hymn 'Oh! the bitter shame and sorrow', written in English, be it noted, by a Frenchman. My father and he had much in common and their first meeting in that eventful summer led to a long interchange of letters. M. Monod's letters were always full of little poetic fancies, some in English, some in French. One

of his early letters, written on 28 October 1896, contains no less than three of such, two triolets in English and one in French. One of the former runs:

> A man of letters, strange to say,
> Is seldom fond of letter-writing;
> He puts it off from day to day . .
> A man of letters!—strange to say.
> Your patient kindness he will pay
> With other labours, more inviting:
> A man of letters, strange to say,
> Is seldom fond of letter-writing.

The first letter of 1897—although I have a suspicion it may belong to 1896—is from Mr. Augustine Birrell and relates to a copy of Dr. Samuel Clarke's edition of Homer in four volumes 1740–54, which had once belonged to Samuel Johnson and ultimately came into my father's possession. He presented it to Mr. Birrell apparently for the Johnson Club. The letter is dated 30 March:

> I feel a little ashamed at having diverted into such a very private channel as myself and my own Library, a gift you originally designed for the Johnson Club of which I am a member. Thus stated my conduct looks black—but my heart does not convict me—I am sure I have done the right thing. The Johnson Club only *dines*, it has no library, it is not a gathering of collectors or connoisseurs—in fine, it is no place for your delightful *relic*. Now with me it has a home. But why did you part with it, I cannot think!—Sometimes

one has these strange whims of stripping oneself of one's possessions—undressing before going to bed—but it is an impulse that must be checked. I have no manner of doubt of the genuineness of the inscription—It has veracity in every letter. I have referred to your *Second Series*.[1] You have falsified your own writings—You there speak of yourself as 'being fortunate enough to possess' this Homer. You must correct this in your next edition or I shall write indignantly to the *Athenaeum*, correcting you. I wonder what return I can make you. Have you the *Foulis* Poems by Mr. Gray MDCCLXVIII. I have a duplicate. Say the word and it is yours. But I shall always be your Debtor.

Apart from the issue of a privately printed 'Ballad to Her Majesty', the jubilee year of 1897 saw the publication of the First Collected Edition, proper, of my father's poems and I find grateful letters of thanks from Arthur Symons for the book and from Sir Theodore Martin and W. J. Courthope for the Ballad. Sir Theodore was kind enough to say of the Ballad: 'You have mastered the difficulty of treating your subject in a form that does not well lend itself to themes of this sort. You have said too, in brief space, just what one wishes should be said.'

I may add that, through the kindness of Lord Crewe, a copy of these verses were sent to Her

[1] *Eighteenth Century Vignettes*, second series, 1894. *Vide* the paper 'Johnson's Library'.

Majesty and an intimation was received from her private secretary (Sir Arthur Bigge) to the effect that the Queen had kept the poem and desired Lord Crewe to know how much she admired it.

Of letters relating to the Collected Poems I quote but one in full and that from A. C. Benson, from whom my father received many letters. It is dated 26 October 1897.

> My only reason for not writing to thank you yesterday for your delightful present was that Monday is always a day of hurried and impatient work, and I wanted to wait for a more tranquil hour. The hour has come, but is accompanied by severe toothache! so that I can only say ungracefully that I prize and love your gift, and that it gives me a thrill of pride that you should have thought of me. I say with entire sincerity—not craving sympathetic correction because I know it's truth—that one real boon of having tried to be a poet and failed, is that it gives one more genuine pleasure in the works of a master, who does by instinct what one cannot achieve by patience. I know many of your poems very well, and I shall hope to know them better still.

It is no doubt true that the first draft of my father's poems, or most of them, came by instinct, but it would be idle to suggest that the subsequent retouching and polishing to which they were invariably submitted, did not involve enormous patience.

Another from the same writer later in the

same year contains a request for a Madrigal in praise of the Queen, to be included in a volume of songs—a project of Sir Walter Parratt. The Madrigal, beginning 'Who can dwell with greatness!' was duly forthcoming and was set to music by Sir Hubert Parry. The volume of poems and music appeared in 1899, entitled *Choral Songs by various writers and composers in Honour of Her Majesty Queen Victoria.*

In 1898 I find only a small bevy of letters including one from Lady Ritchie (Thackeray's daughter) about a review, one from Buxton Forman, and one (apparently the first) from Sir A. T. Quiller Couch asking for a short article on Foote, for a Cornish magazine he was editing.

On 31 December 1898, Pastor Theodore Monod penned the following:

Of an evening.

I thought my heart had died, ah! long ago,
And that the years had filled the vacant place
With some poor substitute, a clumsy thing,
A make-believe, an artificial flower,
That breathed no fragrance, for it had no life.
To-night, there drops upon my lonely desk,
Bathed in the mellow radiance of the lamp,
From an old batch of letters, one thin scrip
Of lilac paper . . . scarcely lilac, now . . .

And lo! my eyes are dimmed with happy tears . . .
My buried heart is beating, burning still:
It sleeps in patient quietness of hope,
As daisies yet unseen, all winter long,
Beneath the snow lie waiting for the Spring.

In 1899 my father and mother attended the wedding of Lord Crewe and Lady Peggy Primrose, to whom they presented a copy of *Collected Poems* with the following inscription, which drew a charming acknowledgement from Lord Crewe, to whose kindness my father was indebted on more than one occasion.

In the duo of love
There is little libretto;
There are few rhymes but 'dove'
In the duo of Love;
Yet we prize it above
All our epic falsetto;—
In the duo of love
There is little libretto.

Later in the year I find one of many letters from that old friend and colleague at the Board of Trade, Cosmo Monkhouse, as well as a note from W. E. Henley, offering 'a copy of *Hawthorn and Lavender*, revised and corrected in the author's own hand, a copy of the edition brought out in England to secure copyright'. This appears to have been the unbound copy bought at my father's book sale

by my sister Dr. Margaret Dobson. On 19 December 1899 my father wrote to Sir Henry Craik:

> I was so much indebted to you for your frank and sympathetic criticism, that I venture, at the risk of boring you, to hope that you will let me know whether the enclosed variant removes your objections.

Below is the reply:

> Most completely. I earnestly hope that you may publish the lines. They would go to the hearts of all in this time of terrible trial. I hope it may have the one good effect of bracing us more completely to our duty.

These are the lines, which appeared in the first number of the *Sphere* early in 1900.

Rank and File.

I

O undistinguished Dead
Whom the bent covers, or the rock-strewn steep
Shows to the stars, for you I mourn, I weep,
O undistinguished Dead!

II

None knows your name.
Blackened and blurred in the wild battle's brunt
Hotly you fell, with all your wounds in front:
This is your fame!

I like to regard these lines as an epitaph to 'An unknown soldier'. I am not entirely sure that my

father was satisfied with his *Rondeaux of the Great War* which were to follow nearly twenty years later, and I am always rather sorry that I included in the *Complete Poetical Works* of 1923 a poem on the War, which my father had sent to *The Times* and then on second thoughts recalled, but as Mr. J. C. Squire said in a kindly review 'in the eyes of this candid old poet, no doubt, rondeaux were the best contribution he could make to the Allied Cause, so he composed rondeaux. Perhaps, after all, for this light that they throw on so delightful a character, readers will be glad to have them'.

The 18th of January 1900 was my father's sixtieth birthday. Naturally therefore a good many of the letters of that year bear upon this event, but I only select one or two. In a letter from W. E. Henley dated 8 May 1900, I find the following paragraph:

> I learned, by accident, that you, my dear Dobson, were sixty t'other day. I couldn't well have known it 'on my own'; but I laid by the journal with a qualm. As if I had done wrong in not being among the first to congratulate and cheer you! I do so now—believe me, I do so now; and, as I do so now, my memory ranges back over thirty years and more to that hospital ward in Smithfield, and those numbers of *St. Pauls* in which I read (thanks to a very elegantly haughty Matron . . .) the *Marquise* and the *Story of Rosina*. And I shall drink a cup to you to-night, dear

Master that you were, and wish you, with a full heart, as many anniversaries more as you care to have.

From the verses written to commemorate the same occasion, I quote, with his kind permission, the following lines by Sir Owen Seaman which first appeared in April 1900 in a fugitive weekly called *The Londoner* and were subsequently reprinted in the Author's *A Harvest of Chaff*.

To Mr. Austin Dobson

After Himself.

(Rondeau of Villon)

At sixty years, when April's face
Retrieves, as now, the winter's cold,
Where tales of other Springs are told
You keep your courtly pride of place.

Within the circle's charmèd space
You rest unchallenged, as of old
At sixty years.

Not Time nor Silence sets its trace
On golden lyre and voice of gold;
Our Poet's Poet, still you hold
The Laurels got by no man's grace—
At sixty years.

The next letter of 1900 is one from Sir John Murray, which has the additional interest of some

verses in an enclosure which I also print. The letter is dated 8 September 1900 and reads:

Your very kind missive has been following me about but I must without further delay write a line to tell you how much pleasure it has given me.

I have spent a good deal of the past two days in the train: and perhaps idle hours beget idle fancies, for on looking over the enclosed, I am half ashamed of my own impertinence in daring to riposte with my 'painted lath' to your skilled rapier, but I venture to send the enclosed as they may serve as a foil.

I do not know if you are acquainted with our editor—Newbolt—he is a charming fellow. Again thanking you for your kind words.

The verses enclosed were as follows:

Who dares to trust on fickle sea
Of Public taste his Argosy
Must seek Minerva's aid to fit
His planks of wisdom—sails of wit,
And, lest plain speaking give offence,
Cordage of tact and common sense.
  Nought can those flimsy barks avail
Painted to sell and not to sail,
Which for a moment catch the Sun
Then sink into oblivion.

But still his labour will be vain
Who dares to tempt that treacherous main
Except his pilot rule the crew
With hand inexorably true;
Except his eye be quick to see,
His mind to judge—with sympathy.

Even so may all endeavours fail
Unless he catch the favouring gale
Which critic fair, and kindly friend
And public praise alone can send.

And so, kind friend, I now return
My hearty thanks to you,
And trust that you may tempted be
One day to join the crew.

The lot is cast—but still it lies
Enshrouded in the dark.
Content we wait, and hope that our
NEWBOLT will hit his mark.

The reference in these lines is to the *Monthly Review* of which Sir Henry Newbolt had but recently assumed the editorship.

I make but a passing reference to the other letters in 1900. Sir Arthur Quiller Couch wrote about certain poems to be included in the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, and seems to have been—indeed like other anthologists—somewhat perplexed at what to include, without excluding essentials. A. C. Benson at the end of the year sent a copy of 'A Song of the Four Seasons', with a Latin translation by E. D. Stone, one of his colleagues at Eton.

The year 1901 opened with a letter from Mrs. G. F. Watts, which evidently referred to a copy of the lines which my father had written on

G. F. Watts's picture entitled 'Good Luck to your Fishing'.

The most charming moment of our Xmas this year was when entered a song singing—How charmed we were and how much we both value the dear little song, I find it difficult to tell you. I can only say, as it stays with us, that it is one of our most valued treasures. I have got a little red Cupid to put over it—which is to be honoured by being framed with the song. I cannot *say* how pleased and touched my husband was. . . .

On 27 March 1901 Lord Morley wrote:

I am delighted indeed to hear from F. Macmillan that you might perhaps allow us to announce a Richardson by you in our little (but not undistinguished) list—on the understanding that you were to have such extension of time as your circumstances might require. For my part, I must say that I covet your name and your work, both, extremely. So I hope very much that you will let it stand on this footing.

On the back is a copy of my father's reply dated next day.

I will not weary you with thanks for your very kind consideration of me. Mr. Macmillan tells me that he told you *three* years. Within three years, then, or earlier, I hope—all being well—to hand in the manuscript for Richardson.

As a matter of fact the promise was more than fulfilled, for the *Samuel Richardson*, in the English Men of Letters Series, appeared in 1902, the completion of the manuscript in about a year being

no doubt partly, at all events, due to the increased leisure that naturally followed my father's retirement in the summer of 1901 from the Board of Trade. But of this more anon. In the meantime I find a letter from Mr. Arthur Waugh (that faithful devotee of my father who has been kindness itself to me) dated 8 May 1901:

I shall seem unprofitable; but there is really neither advice nor criticism that I can offer. There is nothing I could wish omitted, nor re-arranged. Only one or two of the pieces are new to me, but among them 'After a Holiday', which I have never seen before, strikes a most sympathetic note. It moves me to the quick. I like the Royal poems least, but they also have your inimitable finish and dignity. They are certainly among the very best official pieces—perhaps the best—that have been produced since Tennyson died. The rest are yourself undimmed and unaffected by Time or care. With all sincerity I add to Gosse's my own wish that you would make a little English volume of them. There is not a living critic but would welcome them; and I think we could sell them.

This letter deals with a small collection of *Occasional Poems and Inscriptions* which comprised Part II of the second volume of *Miscellanies* published by Dodd Mead & Co., of New York in 1902, part of an attempted uniform edition of Austin Dobson's works in America. Mr. Arthur Waugh's wish at the end of his letter was however fulfilled and the collection did appear in England

(in advance of the American volume) in privately printed form under the title *Carmina Votiva* (1901). But if Mr. Waugh's wish was fulfilled, it was largely if not entirely due to the insistent pleading of Sir Edmund Gosse, who wrote on 8 May 1901 (and subsequently took charge of the publication of the volume):

> I make one more earnest and serious appeal to you not to bring out this delicious collection of verses and inscriptions as a mere appendix to an obscure American publication.
>
> It is madness to do so. They would form a most charming little book of their own, by which you would gain money and pleasure. You might—if you chose—print but one edition, and so limit that edition as to be able almost immediately to carry out your wish to shred the whole into your American pot.
>
> But *do* publish them here, as a little separate volume, first. I beg you as a friend, as a critic, as a bibliophile, as an amateur of your fame, to do this. Don't injure yourself for the mere obstinate pleasure of refusing to do what your best friends recommend.

The summer of 1901 saw the retirement of my father, after nearly 45 years of faithful service, from the Board of Trade, and the occasion called forth from Andrew Lang the following verses which were read at a dinner given in my father's honour in November 1901, by the Whitefriars Club. The verses, which Mrs. Lang kindly allows me to reproduce from her husband's

Complete Poetical Works, were read at the dinner by Mr. Augustine Birrell.

Dear Poet, now turned out to grass
(Like him who reigned in Babylon),
Forget the seasons overlaid
By business and the Board of Trade:
And sing of old-world lad and lass
As in the summers that are gone.

Back to the golden prime of Anne!
When you ambassador had been,
And brought o'er sea the King again,
Beatrix Esmond in his train,
Ah, happy bard to hold her fan,
And happy land with such a Queen!

We live too early, or too late,
You should have shared the pint of Pope,
And taught, well pleased, the shining shell
To murmur of the fair Lepel,
And changed the stars of St. John's fate
To some more happy horoscope.

By duchesses with roses crowned,
And fed with chicken and champagne,
Urbane and witty, and too wary
To risk the feud of Lady Mary,
You should have walked the courtly ground
Of times that cannot come again.

Bring back these years in verse or prose,
(I very much prefer your verse!)
As on some twenty-ninth of May
Restore the splendour and the sway,

Forget the sins, the wars, the woes—
The joys alone must you rehearse.

Forget the dunces (there is none
So stupid as to snarl at you);
So may your years, with pen and book,
Run pleasant as an English brook,
Through meadows floral in the sun,
And shadows fragrant of the dew.

And thus at ending of your span—
As all must end—the world shall say,
'His best he gave; he left us not
A line that saints could wish to blot,
For he was blameless, though a man,
And though a poet, he was gay!'

Apart from the pain caused to him by the death of almost his oldest friend, Cosmo Monkhouse, which practically synchronized with my father's retirement, I think that my father was glad to find himself relieved of the shackles of officialdom and free to devote himself, in a far more leisured fashion than it had ever been possible before, to his researches into the eighteenth century which he loved so much. The only thing that troubled him was his eyesight, which even at this comparatively early date was beginning to give him anxiety. After a short holiday in Switzerland—in a way he was just as happy exploring the Thames from Chiswick to Fulham—he plunged

into his life of Richardson, which as already stated above was published in 1902.

I must not forget however to mention that his retirement from the public service seemed to bring into prominence a suggestion that had been made a good many times before, that he should pay a visit—a sort of lecturing tour—to the United States, where, as must have been obvious from some of the previous letters, he had not a few friends and many admirers. In fact I think I am right in saying that there is still a sort of Austin Dobson Club in America called The Autonoë Club. On 1 October 1901, Jos. Leon Gobeille, —who, one must gather from his many letters, was rather a genial and breezy correspondent— writes:

> When last I saw you a year or two ago, we discussed the possibility of your coming to this country and giving a series of readings from your own works.
>
> A splendid and popular program could be made up, partly quotation, partly gossip, to close with some homely thing, say 'The Sun Dial'.
>
> As a mere business man I believe you would be instantly successful here and I would be glad to underwrite this city for a tidy amount if you came here as your own manager.
>
> Why not impress one of your daughters as a companion and try it over here now that your official duties do not hamper you?

Mr. Gobeille describes himself as a mere business man, but from his many letters he was also a bibliophile with a very nice taste in rare editions. At all events this was only one of several letters in the same key, but nothing came of the project. The fact is that my father disliked travelling far from home. He enjoyed the society of his friends at the National Club or the Athenaeum—he was at his best then, so some of them tell me—but he was at all events a very good best by his own fireside. I must not pass on from 1901 without a reference to the death of Kate Greenaway on 6 November 1901. The lines which my father wrote in this connexion are reproduced in facsimile opposite.

The year 1902 saw the publication of the American volume *Miscellanies* (Second Series) and of *Samuel Richardson*, both of which I have already mentioned, and a sixth volume of Essays entitled *Side-Walk Studies*.

On the 29 September 1902, Pastor Theodore Monod wrote, on his holiday at Yport:

> Cher confrère et ami, Allow me to re-affirm my gratitude for *Miscellanies* (Second Series) although it can hardly be *the* volume,[1] reserved for a 'very select' anthology of friends, with the hope of which you have made my mouth

[1] *Carmina Votiva* (*vide supra*).

"K.G"
Nov. vi. 1901.

Farewell; kind heart And if there be
In that unshored Immensity,
Child-Angels, they will welcome thee.

Clean-souled, clear-eyed, unspoiled, discreet;
Thou gavest thy gifts to make Life sweet;—
These shall be flowers about thy feet!

Austin Dobson
29. i. 1902

'TO K.G.' FACSIMILE OF THE
POET'S HANDWRITING

water. How I would enjoy a visit to you, and your study, and your copy of *Vater Cats*! There I should sit contented, 'turning the tall pages timidly' (a line as graphic as a picture). Among the occasional verses, I particularly like 'In Angel-Court', 'To Laurence Hutton', 'Spring Stirs and Wakes', and the stanza (*inter pulchras pulcherrima*)

'Shall we not leave to sing?' (p. 272).

'Omar Khayyam' is a most clever and amusing attempt to exalt a hero for whom you do not care a fig. (Neither do I, whether in his English or in his French dress.) Have you translated 'Elle et Lui', as you thought of doing? I have tried, but it would be rather a hindrance to both of us than a help, if we should exchange notes before we have done. Shall I fill up the page with quite a recent sketch?

Un soir triste

L'invisible soleil a disparu sans gloire,
Le ciel sombre descend sur la mer presque noire;
Les vagues dans la nuit gémissent faiblement;
Voici qu'une clarté lointaine se découvre,
Et le phare, éclipsé de moment en moment,
Semble un œil flamboyant qui se ferme et se rouvre.

Side-Walk Studies was dedicated to my father's old colleague at the Board of Trade, John Waddon Martyn, who wrote on 4 October 1902:

Very many thanks for the book—*Side-Walk Studies*, which arrived safely this morning. I cannot help feeling somewhat proud of your having dedicated one of your books to me, but far above and beyond that the assurance contained in the verses you have prefixed to the book, that you sometimes look back to the days which we spent

together, has given me very great pleasure. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking you, very cordially for 'kindness on many occasions' which, I can assure you, very much lightened and sweetened the 'galley work' for me.

I am looking forward to reading the book carefully through, including old friends. I have already run through *St. James's Park* and *A Walk from Fulham* &c., both of which I have thoroughly enjoyed. What a very successful photograph your son[1] has made of 'Hogarth's House'. I am quite sure that the book has many pleasant hours in store for me, but above all I value the verses which you have written for me, both for themselves, and for the kind thought which underlies them.

The dedicatory lines were as follows:

As one who on the idle shore
Bends at the Galley bench no more,
I look back to the days when we
Tugged the long sweeps in company.
Yet there were moments even then
When there was thought of Books and Men,
When there was talk of verse and prose—
I send you these remembering those.

Of *Side-Walk Studies* Sir Henry Craik wrote on 26 October 1902:

Although I have by no means extracted from your new volume all the pleasure that it offers and that I mean to gather from it, I must not delay any longer my thanks for your kindness in sending it to me. Good as its elder brothers

[1] The Rev. C. C. Dobson.

were I think this is the choicest of the family. It is not only that, as Lamb says of Walton's *Angler*, 'it would sweeten a man's temper at any time to read it', but it seems so considerately to provide something for all tastes—some new aspect of so many different questions on which it brings us not only entertainment, but sound information and new ideas.

You have a touch, the delicacy of which no one who uses his pen can equal. This is a sincere tribute and one which I am certain that many far better judges than I would willingly accord. I wish it were a higher praise than it at first sight seems. It would still be not a whit too strong.

Another short letter about the same book was from Sidney T. Irwin, one of the sixth-form masters of whom Clifton College has reason to be so proud. It is dated 13 October 1902:

How very delightful of you to send me another of your books! That too I found to-day in the rarely visited pigeon-hole—I have given up looking there for my things of late or my thanks would not have been so tardy.

I see the book is full of delicious things—I opened on the chapter about titled authors, and the couplet on Bath Easton at once attracted me!

I am trying to make a paper for the boys about Rasselas; Johnson's defence of pious pilgrimages is a passage that many of *your grateful readers*, it seems to me, would do well to learn by heart. I like pilgrimages immensely; but, unlike you, to quote the lexicographer again, I do *not* 'bring back the wealth of the Indies, because I do *not* take the wealth of the Indies with me!'

With kindest remembrances to Mrs. Dobson and your

son[1] (whose *knowledge* of the things that move me is that of a true friend).

PS. Mr. Forman's book went back on Friday morning.

Many thanks for the stamps. How scrupulous you are! I fear *I come a long way behind*, as Selden says of a Bishop's wife.

I don't think I ever met any one with such a genius for quotation as Mr. Irwin. His conversation was almost one continuous quotation.

I conclude this chapter with two letters on the subject of *Samuel Richardson*. The first is from Mr. Arthur Waugh, dated 13 November 1902. I quote only an extract.

I sat well into the night last evening reading your *Richardson*, and did not lay it down till I had read every word. From beginning to end I enjoyed it to the full. It is, if I may say so, incomparably the best of the new volumes of the E. M. L.[2] series which I have seen; but it is much more than that—it is a fine, clear, delicately balanced piece of biography—a really admirable bit of literary workmanship and construction.

What particularly struck me was the clearness and colour of the narrative. I have sometimes found your prose too allusive for a reader who is not, like yourself, steeped in the period; a single sentence of yours sometimes, to my mind, contains too many ideas and cross-ideas: the brain is too much occupied in appreciating each turn of thought. But nowhere in the *Richardson* did I feel this. The flow of the narrative is strong and clear; there is plenty of allusion, but it explains itself, and within close limits a really spacious

[1] Mr. B. H. Dobson. [2] English Men of Letters.

picture is presented, setting the man in true relation to his work, and the work in true relation to its time. This, surely, is the highest function of biography. If it be not, I for my part know no higher.

The chapter at the end that summarizes the work is richly critical, and the accounts of each several book are full, but not *too* full. I do not find any too much about Fielding: what there is seems to illustrate the main subject and to contribute to its understanding.

The style seems to me firm and at the same time plastic. There are only three passages which seemed to offer room for criticism. Twice you introduce a slang expression, playfully: e.g. 'a very large order'. I do not like this in work of this kind. I know Henry James does it violently, but I don't think it desirable. It doesn't seem to me to add gaiety, and it does seem to lower the tone. And there is one passage on the first page, where a sentence has got so condensed as not quite to hold together grammatically. You speak (I have not the book here) of one of Richardson's forbears being 'a joiner a business which' &c. But a joiner is not a business, he only follows a business. Isn't this so?

I hope what I have said will not appear impertinent, as coming from a mere underling to a writer of your position. You know my intention is far otherwise. But I have written as I thought and I am sure the book is in every way a fine piece of work and will be so recognized wherever it is read.

With regard to the same book, Sir Leslie Stephen wrote on 15 November 1902.

Accidents prevented me from opening your parcel till yesterday when I was sorry to find that I had left your kind letter so long unanswered.

Of the book I need only say that I read it with thorough enjoyment and agreement—I scarcely differ from any point in the criticism and admire your skill in making an interesting biography out of the letters. I feel a kind of pride in the book, as its merits are in some degree reflected upon your collaborators. I had an experience the other day which rather amused me. I re-read a good deal of Clarissa. The book impressed me at times as simply repulsive, as bad as the worst of Zola—I fancy that it was because the process of having one's nose rubbed in such a mess so persistently suggests a certain callousness not to say brutality in the rubber. Anyhow I report the sensation as a psychological fact, not as implying my settled view.

I find it harder to speak of your letter. I can claim no gratitude from you for not having been swinish enough to refuse your pearls for the *Cornhill*. But it is pleasant to think that, rightly or wrongly, my editorial relations to you gave me a place in your kindly regard—You have more than once shown a friendly feeling towards me by which I have been touched and which I cordially reciprocate.

Such things are more than ever valuable to me—I am doomed to an invalid life henceforth and doubt whether I shall ever meet you again at the London Library—I can still do some work and have no serious suffering. Still I am by force a recluse: and it is gratifying to know that friends whom I do not meet think of me occasionally with kindness. Your letter was a most welcome personal greeting and I thank you for it cordially.

On 8 November 1902, Sir Edmund Gosse wrote:

Your great and faithful admirer, my wife, settled down with great gusto to the study of your *Richardson*—begin-

ning 'Well, I hoped it was going to be a much bigger book than this', which speaks well for her appetite. My felicitations on such a delightful task completed.

I must not pass on from 1902 without recording the fact that in this year my father received the honorary degree of LL.D. from the University of Edinburgh in company with the late Lord Alverstone (then Lord Chief Justice), Mr. H. H. Asquith (the late Earl of Oxford and Asquith), and Miss Beale.

IX

LETTERS FROM HIS FRIENDS (*cont.*)

1903–1921

ON 12 March 1903, a dinner of the Johnson Club was held at the Salisbury Hotel off Fleet Street. Some verses[1] were composed by Austin Dobson for the occasion by way of welcome to W. J. Courthope, and these (which appeared subsequently in the *Sphere* of 21 March 1903) were privately printed for the occasion by Clement Shorter, Prior of the Club. It is to these verses that the following letter dated 14 March 1903 from Mr. Courthope refer:

I feel that I have not expressed with anything like adequacy my sense of gratitude to you for the delightful and unexpected compliment you paid me the other night. Indeed I cannot. The only fault in your verses is the excess of your kindness and generosity to the fortunate subject of them. But that is a fault on which I am not likely to be severe: and I can only say the 'Welcome' has pleased me more than any praise I have ever received. Filled as the verses are with all the charm and grace and breeding of the century we both love, you could not have found a more exquisite way of flattering my vanity.

I shall always treasure them as a tribute of kindness and

[1] 'A welcome from the Johnson Club.'

friendship from one on whose poetical merits all the world are agreed.

Another set of verses was composed for a dinner of the Omar Khayyám Club on 27 March 1903. These were read for the Author by Sir Henry Newbolt, who had written on 9 March:

I am instructed by the Committee of the Omar Khayyam Club to request you to furnish a poem for the comfort of the Brothers and the delight of their guests at the next dinner, which is fixed for Friday the 27th instant. As you know, a few verses only are needed, and the subject is quite indefinite. If you are unable to be present yourself I should be proud to read the poem for you: and it would of course in any case be printed on the *menu* for the evening. But I very much hope you may find it possible to come yourself. Will you kindly let me have a card as soon as you conveniently can, to set my mind at rest? The verses themselves would do very well in a week or ten days' time. Sincerely yours in Omar.

The verses,[1] which appeared on the dinner menu, were subsequently reprinted in the *Tatler* for 8 April 1903.

On 19 September 1903 Mr. Egerton Castle asked to be allowed to dedicate his novel *Incomparable Bellairs* to my father 'who (he wrote) more than any one I know, has made that elusive and fascinating age live for us in shapely form'.

On 30 September, Canon Alfred Ainger, who

[1] 'Under which King?'

had received from my father a letter appreciative of his *Life of Crabbe*, wrote:

How good of you to write me such a charming letter, and to show by your reference to detailed passages how carefully you have read my book! Thank you very much—You will not need to be told how precious is the approval of those who have themselves won golden opinions from all men of judgement. How strange that you should have yourself had the Bunbury volume on your shelves, at the very time that I was struggling to account for those six months of poor Crabbe's life in London.

. . . . . .

I hope we shall soon meet again under the benignant shade of the Duke of York's column.[1] I hope too that your *Fanny Burney* is not far off. I have had a letter from John Morley, as gratifying as the one from you, which has pleased me much. Have you moved houses, or merely changed the Title of the old one? And what is your new language (Welsh or Irish)—for, like Mrs. Squeers, I am 'no grammarian'?

The allusion is to the Welsh name of our house at Ealing—Porth-y-Felin, the name also borne by my grandfather's house at Holyhead. It means the Gate of the Mill.

The *Fanny Burney* appeared soon after, and on 11 November 1903 A. C. Benson wrote:

This letter has a double purpose. First to say that I read *Fanny Burney* with *much* delight. You give a living picture of her and *her surroundings*. That is the difficult

[1] i.e. in the Athenaeum.

thing to do—so many people's biographies succeed in making the hero or heroine stand out against a dim background of shadow shapes—but with you all the scene is alive.

I know Chessington well, or used to as a boy, and I cannot refrain from telling you with pride that Mr. Delany's house, near the gate of the Park, *belongs* to your humble servant! It is called the Gatehouse and I bought it two years ago, though I didn't know then it was Mrs. Delany's. *Second*, I am venturing to send you a little autobiographical scrap. It seems, to many of my friends, so foolish of me to leave Eton, that I have had to put a little apologia on paper, and herewith send you a copy. But *please* do not feel bound to acknowledge it!

Mr. Benson was about to assume the Mastership of Magdalene College, Cambridge.

Early in 1904, I find a letter (one of several) from Mr. James Carleton Young. It spoke of a consignment of my father's books arriving shortly 'to complete my collection of your delightful writings'. 'At your convenience', he wrote, 'please write in each so much as may be your pleasure, sign and date same, returning to me by post.' Mr. Young's ingenious way of collecting a library must surely be unique, and Minneapolis, the home of the 'Book King' as he was called, the richer for so wonderful a library systematically collected from authors of every nationality.

On 21 July 1904, I find a letter from Mr. Max Beerbohm—who did a cartoon of my father and

Sir Edmund Gosse in a volume entitled *Poets' Corner*. He wrote:

> When I (see subsequent signature) met you at the Devonshire Club, you told me that you had liked my picture of Omar and Thou; and you quoted to me, à propos, a couplet which very much delighted me. I cannot remember how the couplet went; and I wonder if you would be so good as to write it down for me. I want it not merely for my own private satisfaction, but also for a professional reason—too complicated and tedious for me to explain to you—I feel that I am taking rather a liberty; so I have recourse to the British panacea of a stamped and addressed envelope.

For the sake of space I quote nothing more for 1904, but it is to be observed that towards the end of that year, my father edited and provided an introduction to a stately six-volume edition of Fanny Burney's *Diary* (Macmillan & Co.) and there is another charming letter from A. C. Benson acknowledging a copy.

That my father's wide knowledge of the eighteenth century extended to contemporary portraiture is evident from the following letter from Sir Lionel Cust, dated, National Portrait Gallery, 28 March 1905. 'I have been offered here an important portrait of Fanny Burney by Hoppner. It might interest you to see it, and I shall be glad to have your opinion as to its authenticity.'

Reference has been made elsewhere to the circle of artist friends and admirers. I now add another to that list—Sir Alfred East, who wrote on 2 July 1906.

I have sent you the aquatint of 'The Avenue. Night'—and with it a very timid venture of my own into the fields you have made so fascinating and for which I send you my thanks. Your book is not only a charming souvenir of our meeting, but it is a revelation of new beauties I had missed in well-known things. I like your sympathetic attitude towards the art of the painter which so few writers feel from the point of view of Greuze and Balzac.

I want to see you at my studio and show you some things which will tell you what I am striving for.

The 'timid venture' is as follows:

Night.

After the turmoil
The stress and strain;
After defeat in the strenuous strife,
Where cruel thought,
And cruel pain,
Are throbbing days in the pulse of life.

Shut out the light
Lest the bitter grey
Of day's endeavour—the plans that fail,
Make self-abasement
And unbelief,
The last defence of my soul assail.

Ah! soft sweet touch
Of the silent night—!
When grief and sorrow have had their way,
Come whisper of Love,
The knowledge of right,
And hope that breathes with the dawn of day.

The first letter for 1907 is from the business-like and refreshing Mr. Jos. Leon Gobeille, of whose correspondence an example has already been given. My father had evidently intimated that a lecturing tour in the U.S.A. was beyond his capacity and so out of the question. But Mr. Gobeille was not to be disheartened. On 2 April 1907, he wrote:

Dear Sir and Friend, I have received the Longfellow sonnet all in your best 'Sunday-go-to meetin' hand-writing. *Thank you.* Your letter, quoting a previous one *in re* coming to this country, seems to me scarcely conclusive.

I shall try and 'round up' nine more of your admirers who, with me, shall underwrite your trip and guarantee a certain minimum, say $750 or $1,000, per week.

Of course we would have no pecuniary interest in the profits; only in case of loss we would make good the deficit, e.g. suppose a war should break out with Japan or Germany your season would probably be a financial failure; that's where *we* would come in.

Thackeray made a great deal of money here and Dickens nearly £20,000 (*vide* Forster). You should do as well, as the U.S. is much richer and more appreciative now than then.

I remember that you have a galaxy of daughters. Select one—possibly not the most amiable! (unfortunate phrase, which gets me disliked from the beginning! ! !). She would be companion, and useful to fend you from bores, *has beens* and *never-wases* and to protect you from such as would try to kill you with kindness. One thing more you must do for me. Go to your photographer's and have him print me a portrait from your favourite negative. I will frame it neatly and hang it with the rest of my 'Dobson plunder'.

I am enclosing a postal order for £½ so you may not be put to expense for this photo. I know how thoughtless some Americans are when it comes to money matters and I don't wish to be a charge on you, except possibly on your good nature!

Later in the year I find an amusing letter from Mr. George Saintsbury, which begins with some verses. They were the result of my father's suggestion to Mr. Frowde that Mr. Saintsbury should be asked to edit the Oxford Thackeray. The lines ran:

> To DOBSON kind, and DOBSON just,
> May I be thankful till I bust!
> View him, ye Muses! as he stands
> With cornucopias in his hands
> Not for to serve his private ends,
> But for to lavish on his friends!
> See how he prompts the grateful task
> (What gratefuller could G.S. ask?)
> Herald and harbinger to be
> Of mighty William Makepeace T!

Should that GREAT MAN refuse t'approve
(Avert it, Fate! Forbid it, Jove)
Muses! lend wind to puff my cheeks
(What time Fr—wde's gold distends my breeks!)
And bid the world with trumpet voice
'Observe me! I am DOBSON'S CHOICE!'

Then follows the letter.

You see I'm not long back from Bath (where my stay was unluckily cut short, but which did me a lot of good) and I'm just at 1,700 in my *Prosody*. So I do the octosyllabics naturally.

Seriously, I am heartily obliged to you and have told Frowde that I'm his man bar Nemesis. I have asked him whether he means the novels only. It will be a pity if he does not include the *Poems* and the *Roundabouts*. . . . I hope to be in town at the end of next week and to see you. Meanwhile repeated thanks.

The year 1908 saw the appearance of *De Libris*: a somewhat experimental combination of prose and verse. I find letters relating to the volume from Mr. Arthur Waugh and others, but reproduce the following only, from Mr. Walter Jerrold, dated 17 October 1908.

When selecting my books at the *Daily Telegraph* office on Friday night I pounced on *De Libris* and on reaching home found your very welcome gift awaiting me! It at once becomes a book with Associations—one of the most prized. Many thanks for it. It is pleasant to find you so whole-hearted an admirer of Hugh Thomson—he was down here on Saturday looking I think much better than he

had been. I hope that you will forgive the accompanying amplification of a sentence from your earlier letter! and I further hope that when the author of *De Libris* reached his Epilogue

his mind began
again to scheme, to purpose and to plan.

The next letter, from Maurice Hewlett, dated 7 December 1908, was evidently in reply to my father's criticisms on a book of verses, which was subsequently published.

That was a very kind letter you wrote me. It will require a totally different style if I am ever to hate you. As things are, I am greatly uplifted by what you tell me—and shall now proceed, strictly on the anonymous task. I don't expect to be read much, but do believe that if I am read at all that is the only way to get an unbiassed opinion.

I am going now to peer into all your tickings and pointings. I suspect you are right about *Turk* and *dirk*. Woe is me! I rather liked that verse. *Daughters* and *Waters* I think I could defend. I carry my love of simplicity very far in versifying, and would rather be banal than rhetorical or inflated. One of the astounding things about Dante is his courage in never refusing an image—even when there is a risk of being ridiculous. Sometimes, indeed, he *is* ridiculous; but I respect that sincerity of his so much that I can never bring myself to admit it.

I see your point in the four lines of Leto's Child. They are rather ugly—and shall be amended. But I had great difficulty in that piece in conveying precisely what I meant and felt—which was nothing perverted (I need hardly say),

but yet was 'not quite nice'. I must labour over that again if labour is all.

I feel guilty when you tell me of your chill, lest it may have been due to the depressing influence of my Muse! We missed you at the Corner[1] on Friday, and wondered what kept you.

My father had a very considerable correspondence with Richard Watson Gilder, sometime editor of the *Century Magazine*, but I regret to say that few of the letters remain. I quote one dated 27 February 1909, in order that the name of R. W. Gilder may not be missed from the many whose letters have already been referred to.

Dearly Beloved Austin Dobson. You have made me your debtor again by those good verses of yours in acknowledgement of the alleged 'Complete' edition of your old friend's verses.

I tell you I am getting homesick for London—When will I ever get over there again—make for Gosse's hospitable house (which in its new identity I do not know) and once again colloque with A.D. and the other 'boys'.

You must steal a moment or two and tell me how you and Madame are, and where over the face of the earth are scattered your offspring—whether all goes well with you—whether Gosse is as content as ever among his books and Lords; and how are Watson and Phillips now-a-days—and how goes the Empire of song generally.

By virtue of mortality I am pushed on into platform places—and made to do all manner of 'choses'—a sad one was the conduct of the Stedman memorial meeting. I will soon

[1] A small coterie of members of the National Club.

be able to send you a pamphlet record of that. Last summer we had the same duty to perform for Aldrich . . .When are you and Mrs. Austin Dobson coming over to take tea in Helena's garden—'Helena' wants to know!

Later in the year I find a short note from Sir Edmund Gosse dated 27 September 1909. 'You have made me very happy with the unexpected gift of *Ludibria Ventis*. It shall be bound by Rivière in full morocco. How I value all these evidences of your untiring affection, and what a treasure, heaped higher every year, your friendship has brought me!' The work referred to was a set of proof sheets[1] of a new section of poems which was about to be added to a new edition of the Author's *Collected Poems*.

The year 1910 produced a large crop of letters, chiefly no doubt on account of the fact that 18 January of that year was my father's seventieth birthday, which was celebrated in a manner described in Chapter X.[2]

But in May my father contributed to *The Times* some 'In Memoriam' verses for King Edward VII. These drew from Thomas Hardy the following dated 22 May 1910.

I was very glad to see that you had, after all, been inspired to write a few verses, and I knew, without your telling me, that the Muse had unexpectedly touched you up

[1] See p. 244. [2] See p. 236.

to it, in spite of yourself. They are direct and forcible lines, with no rhetorical shams in them of the kind we have been treated to in such profusion during the last few days.

Later in the year a volume of Essays entitled *Old Kensington Palace and other Papers* appeared, and I find most appreciative letters from Col. Prideaux and Sir Henry Craik. To quote an extract from the latter's;—'You can hardly guess how much a book like yours means to one who has been immersed in the turbid waters of politics and of an election. It is like a breath of wholesome air after the fetid atmosphere of a political meeting.'

The year 1911 opened with another of the gay effusions of Mr. Jos. Leon Gobeille—I quote only a portion.

Your cheery little letter received. There was certainly great 'doin's' in your 'year of seventy' all over the U.S. You are much too modest regarding your popularity here. Of course *I* do not count, for I have been a Dobson enthusiast from primitive times, but even I was surprised at the furoor of the feeling in your favour.

The year 1912 saw the production of yet another volume of Essays entitled *At Prior Park and other Papers*. It is to this volume that the following letter from that Victorian stalwart, Frederic Harrison, refers.

I must write to thank you for your new volume which

I have just given as a birthday present to my wife. It is delightful, not only as one of your most charming eighteenth century studies, but as full of local and personal memories which will be around me in the close of my life. I have been spending some time this summer at Bath and (not for the first time) meaning to settle in its neighbourhood; mainly for the sake of my wife's health, for she cannot stand this wind-swept hill in East Kent and she needs the resources of an invalid city. We go to live at Bath. I have taken a lease of a house in Royal Crescent—one of Wood's of 1760, and we shall look on Prior Park from our windows. Allen, Fielding, Chatham are my favourite heroes. I really love them all as if they were old personal friends. At Bath we shall live in their atmosphere. And your book will lie on the boudoir table and recall them—and recall you and our studies. As I shall be more than a hundred miles west of London, I am sorry that we shall meet no more at the London Library. I bid farewell to London and to London friends—Quid Romae faciam?

I have finished my bits of books and retire to a cleaner air and a more peaceful town to read my old books.

Farewell!

PS. If I had ten years more of life before me—and I may not count as many months—and I had not much to do at home—and I have everything to do—I would spend my leisure in writing a history of Bath.

A good deal of correspondence in 1913 deals with the Austin Dobson number of the *Bookman*, but there are one or two other letters. In November 1913, Sir Edmund Gosse wrote:

I was very glad to get your kind and amusing letter;

and to have news, on the whole reassuring, of your health. You will be sorry to hear that I have been ill now for nearly a month, with sciatica, followed by an enteric attack which kept me in bed nearly the whole of last week. I find, as we get older, it becomes more and more difficult to throw things off. Thank you for your most kind words about the Légion d'Honneur. It was a very great surprise to me, and a most delightful honour. I cannot help wishing, since it was to come, it might have come a little earlier, since the only use of it is in France, and I am afraid that my travelling days are well nigh over. I do not feel at all worthy of so rare a distinction, but if we only got what we are worthy of, where would luck be? I am very glad that you are at work, and Lord G. Gordon[1] is a capital subject. Of course, Wright[2] will send you down all the books you require: I know he will be proud to help you. How curious the booklessness of country towns is in England! Now, in Wiesbaden where we spent September, there was in the hotel quite a splendid library of the German classics, and I had no need to go to a bookshop for entertainment.

Whilst I have been in bed, to relieve the tedium I have written a little picture[3] of our old fairy-friend, Lady Dorothy [Nevill]—or rather a sketch. I hope you will like it. I have not yet decided whether to publish or privately print it.

We earnestly hope Mrs. Dobson keeps pretty well. We unite in all kindest remembrances.

Later in the same month, there is a letter from

[1] This refers to a paper on the 'Gordon Riots'.

[2] Dr. Hagberg Wright, librarian of the London Library.

[3] This is evidently the privately printed item referred to on p. 58.

Lord Southborough (then Sir Francis Hopwood) dated 19 November 1913:

I remember many years ago—alas!—Calcraft's[1] propounding the conundrum who wrote, 'When in reach, take a peach' and your telling me in the middle of the Horse Guards Parade that you could answer it! Now I have another one for you a quarter of a century later. In the weakness of the flesh I wrote a letter to *The Times* and it appeared on October 10th of this year if you care to refer to a copy. The letter was a poor thing all about the grave of a midshipman I had found in a little churchyard in Connecticut. But in it I quoted some lines copied from the tomb-stone and since they appeared in print both *The Times* and I have been bombarded with letters to know where they came from. They are not good and G. W. E. Russell says they were written over a bowl of punch in the wardroom of the *Superb*! So horrified at this cynicism I turn to you with thoughts of 'When in reach take a peach'. These are the lines:

His spirit fled, yet ere it bounded free
To the fair region of eternity,
Its earthly stay had been so pure, so chaste,
That nature smiled to view her heavenly guest.
His life departed, yet ere that expired,
That life, which virtue warmed and glory fired
The brightest ray of earthly honour gleamed
And round his parting breath in radiance beamed.
Brightly it shone till life's last ebb was given
Then upward fled to plead his cause in Heaven.

What does the authority say? The lines are in the style of Falconer's 'Shipwreck'. I hope you are well.

[1] Sir Henry Calcraft of the Board of Trade.

Unfortunately there is nothing to show whether the recipient was able to provide the author's name.

Two privately printed poems (afterwards included in the *Complete Poetical Works*) drew from A. C. Benson a letter dated 3 January 1914:

Thank you ever so much for your fine poem, moving so nimbly and charmingly, and yet full of high and mellow wisdom—I think that, among many fine touches,

> Grateful, one knew not why,
> Even for sadness

condenses into itself a singular wealth of experience and observation.

I am sorry to hear that you find difficulties in getting about—so do I; but in my case it is at present a multiplicity of small Academical engagements.

Still it is always a pleasure when we *do* meet—and you give me the kindest and sincerest of welcomes, now as ever. I hope you will have a happy and prosperous year ahead of you, both *felix* and *faustus* as the Romans said!

The same poems were sent to Mr. Arthur Waugh, who wrote one of his characteristically appreciative letters, dated Epiphany, 1914:

The poems are beautiful—most beautiful indeed—and I do thank you with all my heart for sending them to me. I shall put them in the *Collected Poems* at the end. I read them aloud to my family at breakfast. My wife's eyes were full of tears, and even youth, for whom Life is still a blank manuscript book, would understand the second poem, no

less than the first, and admire the splendid cheerfulness that animates it.

Finding the ray of hope
Gleam through distresses;
Building a larger scope
Out from successes.

Alec (aged 15½), whose life at Sherborne now is one perpetual conflict between a wild enthusiasm for football and a constant clashing with authority in the classroom,—looked up at me, as I read that, with a quick flash of recognition. It put his present philosophy in a nutshell. These are noble poems—and so exactly YOU . . . I am so very sorry to hear you have been ill. I had heard nothing of it, and send my love and truest wishes for a speedy and complete recovery. God bless you, Poet of the Dawn. There is always light, and life, and help in every line that you have written.

The year 1915 saw the appearance of a volume of Essays entitled *Rosalba's Journal and other Papers*, and on 14 October of that year Sir Edmund Gosse wrote the first letter quoted in this chapter that touches upon the war:

My thanks for your delightful gift of *Rosalba's Journal* should have reached you sooner. I rather lazily hoped to see you at the R. L. F.[1] yesterday. We are reading your book aloud in the evenings: and we find that each chapter is just enough, with the conversation it arouses, to fill an evening pleasantly. Of course, almost all of them were known to *me* already, but they bear repetition perfectly. I

[1] Royal Literary Fund.

think that it is wonderful that you sustain so well the high level of interest.

The fall of M. Delcassé, which you see in the papers this morning, means more to me than to most people, for he had invited me to go over to France, and record some observations as the guest of the French Government. This I refused to do, but on his pressingly repeating the invitation, I had accepted, although with a good deal of hesitation on account of age and breath. But plans were not fixed, and no doubt I shall hear no more about it.

If this visit to France falls through, as I suppose it will, you must let me come down again and see you. I have so much to hear.

The zeppelins came again last night. Our two daughters saw the invader, like a little golden box high up in the dark blue inane. But my wife and I who had gone round to spend the evening with the Walter Leafs saw and heard nothing!!

The first letter for 1916 is one from Lord Curzon, and is an example of the meticulous care which he personally bestowed on his letters. It is dated 14 June 1916:

On looking at the 'Authors' report which I was incorrect in saying had been submitted to me, for I never saw it till it was in print—I find that it did me a more serious injustice than I had believed, for it left out the following all of whom I mentioned: *Post Office*. Edmund Yates, A. B. Walkley. *Board of Trade*. E. Gosse, Yourself. *Education Office*. J. W. Mackail. *Meteorological Office*. F. T. Bullen. *Inland Revenue Office*. Benjamin Kidd. These were in addition to the names correctly given to the Author.

Truly it is almost worse to be half reported than not to be reported at all. Anyhow the mistake has its compensations for it has given me the pleasure of your acquaintance.

One more letter for 1916, and that from Sir Herbert Warren, dated 8 September. After giving permission to the recipient to quote an extract from *Poets and Poetry*, the writer goes on:

Next let me go to something more important. I have not seldom thought of writing to tell you what abundant and the same time delicate pleasure your writings, both in Poetry and Prose, have afforded me, now during many years, ever since I was an undergraduate. I have a great fondness for the eighteenth century, the delightful 'teacup times of hoop and hood', both in England and France and how much you have done for that *genre*! The quotation reminds me of a most artistic and touching poem you wrote when Tennyson was taken from us. It was perfect in its way and did my sad heart good. I often go back to it. If your books or anything else brings you to Oxford, I wish you would come and see me in the college of Addison, Collins and Gibbon.

Nineteen-Seventeen saw the appearance of a new kind of Austin Dobson book, namely *A Bookman's Budget*, which as I have already said was largely responsible for encouraging Mr. Saintsbury to produce his inimitable *Scrap Book* series of more recent times. The book was dedicated to Mr. Arthur Waugh and drew a grateful

letter from him. But a great many other letters followed, probably more than in the case of any other of the Author's latter-day volumes. On 16 September 1917, Mr. M. H. Spielmann wrote:

I have just received your book and hasten to offer you my most cordial and appreciative thanks for it. I knew how delightful, helpful, and indeed truly important it would be, even before I read *The Times* Literary Supplement on it; and now that I have seen and read a little of it, I recognize that it will very soon be recognized as a Classic—for it contains a concentration of wit and wisdom, charm and grace, such as is to be found in few books indeed in the language. Judge, then, of my satisfaction in being enshrined in your pages, even though my name be only embroidered on the hem of dear old Burton's mantle—a double honour.

On the previous day Hugh Thomson had written:

I am very proud and flattered to have this volume from you, and to find in it such a gratifying reference to myself. You already know how I have anticipated the appearance of the *Bookman's Budget* and a delightful treat it is. To writers and cultivated people generally, with libraries at their elbows, it will open out an endless variety of pleasant byeways leading them on and on they know not whither. The unexpectedness is one of its charms. An exquisite country lane, with breaks in the hedgerow where a glimpse of lovely distance or mysterious woodland causes one to exclaim 'Oh' and smile with pleasure is what I compare it to . . . .

HOGARTH PAINTING FIELDING

Fancy Silhouette by Hugh Thomson

It was of the same book that Sir Gerald du Maurier wrote on 28 September:

> I know how glad my father would have been to have had anything he wrote included in any volume that you were responsible for, as he had a genuine admiration for your verse. I found a daughter of mine who is nine years old gesticulating and reading 'Beau Brocade' to herself this afternoon—which is almost a coincidence.

Other letters on the same subject were received from Sir Herbert Warren, W. P. Ker, Maurice Hewlett, and Mr. Augustine Birrell who said: 'I have just been reading with delight *A Bookman's Budget* which on returning to Chelsea I shall place side by side with *Patchwork* [1]—only wishing that there were more such books in the Library.'

There was no doubt about the popularity of *A Bookman's Budget*, in spite of the war. In fact a few letters reached my father about it from soldiers serving at the front.

The year 1918 opens with a birthday letter from Sir Edmund Gosse. It is dated 17 January. 'We shall think much and with great affection of you to-morrow. It is more than forty years ago that we formed a friendship which has been infinitely precious to me. May it last ten years more, and we shall celebrate its Golden Jubilee!'

[1] By Frederick Locker.

At the end of the same year, I find a brief letter from Mr. Edward Marsh dated 19 December 1918:

I wonder if you will care to have my little memoir of Rupert Brooke—anyhow I care to send it you, as a small greeting for Christmas—I think you will be amused and charmed by some of his letters.

I think you never met him, but I remember how pleased he was when I told him of that afternoon, now nearly seven years ago, when I showed some of his poems to you and Gosse at the old National Club, and you praised his conduct of the Octosyllabic metre.

Hoping you are well and enjoying the Peace and with all affectionate remembrances and good wishes.

The next quoted appears to belong to 1919. It is from Mr. E. V. Lucas and dated 27 January.

As you are perhaps aware Mrs. Abbey has asked me to compile a memoir of her husband. In reading through such of his letters as have been sent to me, I find many references to you, on some of which I shall greatly value more information such as you alone can give. Par exemple he writes to Charles Parsons of *Harper's Magazine* on March 27th, 1883, in connexion with the *Quiet Life* book (for which you wrote a Prologue and Epilogue) 'Dobson has been inspired to write a song to one of the drawings which will go to him by Thursday's post. He is writing several things for me—from rough notions of mine. One a nautical song. We hope to get enough together to make a little volume'. Here I should ask you to identify these poems and to tell me if they are collected in your works and if not if I might quote them and state their authorship. One such archaic experi-

ment—a very charming one—I find here in your hand I think on a sheet of note paper with 17B Eldon Road, Kensington printed on it. It is called 'A Love Song A.D. 16—' and was published in *Harper's* anonymously, with a drawing by Abbey, in August 1885 and is given to you in the index.

Might I perhaps come out to Ealing one afternoon and talk of these and other matters concerning E. A. A.?

The volume referred to is of course Mr. E. V. Lucas's *Life of E. A. Abbey*, prepared for Mrs. Abbey in two sumptuous volumes (with many allusions to my father in them) and published at the end of 1921.

The year 1920 opens with a short letter dated 1 January 1920 from Sir Edmund Gosse, acknowledging a poem:

How you have delighted us with your beautiful little poem! Nothing of your skill declines, you are still always the consummate artist. We hope you are pretty well and able to get about. When the days get longer you must let us come again to see you. We unite in warmest wishes for you all in 1920.

The next is dated 17 January 1920, from Sir Alfred Bateman:

I notice that you are an Octogenarian to-morrow and I cannot help troubling you with a line to give you my best wishes on the occasion. We often talk about you at the National and wish that you still came among us. I am very sorry not to have looked you up for a year or more but I

am not good at making excursions being a bad walker and apt to get faint. However I shall try to do better when the spring comes. Mr. Gosse continues to be splendidly young and active. . . . Fraser comes up from Weybridge once a week but he is still very careful in his food, not taking salt or wine. I have sold my Wimbledon house and bought one in town which is handy near Earl's Court Station and saves my walking. . . . If only Pelham[1] had lived! There are very few of your time left. I have been to see the Board of Trade in its new house in Great George Street. Just 50 years since we moved across. . . .

In 1921 my father's eighty-first and last birthday prompted quite a number of letters. The first dated 18 January 1921 was from his old admirer Clement Shorter:

And this is your eighty-first birthday and I have had the date in my pocket book and transfer it each year to a new book. I enclose you a sample. You won't use it but you can give it away. In years gone by you could have written brilliant verses on the possibilities of a pocket book. Well, I hope you are happy. You share your years with two dear friends of mine, Hardy and Clodd. Both are well and I hope you are. Hardy spoke to me on his telephone from Dorchester wishing me a Happy New Year on New Year's Day—the only time he has ever used it, his wife tells me. Clodd writes me cheery letters and so I conclude one is younger at 81 than at 63 which is my age. I feel worn out sometimes and ask myself if life is worth living after 60 and if the happiness of the old is all make-belief. But this is a mood: and after three years of unutterable loneliness I

[1] See p. 222.

am cheerful again. Well, you must think on this your birthday of all the happiness you have given by your writings. For myself I know of none from whom I have received so many kindnesses and so with abundant good wishes. . . .

On 19 January 1921 Frederic Harrison wrote:

Heartiest good wishes to you and my congratulations on the very interesting 'interview' in *The Times*. I am entirely of your mind in all your judgements of men and books. All hail! ye Victorians! Ye were serious, clean, and steadfast, and ye did not cry—go up Baldheads!—to your fathers!

It is now quite twenty years that I gave up my regular reading of recent ephemerals. I came to 'years of discretion' with the present century and gave up London—Mudie—and Clubs, and resolved to 'live cleanly'. I have long re-read the great books—Latin—Greek poets—Tacitus—Lucian—Sterne—Scott—Fielding—Austen and Thackeray. I really *cannot* read three pages of a modern novel! It is like listening to what the man and woman in the street might say in a tram-car. At this moment, I am trying to understand Einstein, and reading Montaigne, Erasmus, Gray's Letters, and oddly enough for the *first time* Smollett. He always disgusted me and I have a bad edition with Cruikshank's drawings, and I could not get on. But at last I see what life, what invention, what English!—brute as he is. He explains Fielding's faults and justifies those rotten Plays of H.F. What an age it was! I never was a 'volcano',—but I am utterly *extinct*. . . . But I wait the end in peace and content.

Maurice Hewlett also saw *The Times* 'interview', because he wrote on the same day:

I see by *The Times* to-day that you have had a birthday, which I daresay would have been a happy one but for the affliction of its young man peeping and botanizing.[1] I was touched also, and sensibly uplifted by your kind reference to me. Remember that I too am a Victorian, and 60 on Saturday; remember that when I began to pipe you were an Olympian; and don't hesitate to believe that praise from you means very much to me.

We may not see each other nowadays—and South Wilts is a long way off Ealing; but I am tempted to get G. Bell to send you a little book of mine, which may amuse a spare moment—and you can afford yourself some now.

I am just off on a speechmaking round in the north, beginning at Manchester on Sunday. The Quakers want to hear my views upon Peace proposals—and I must not disoblige them.

All good wishes for the year you are entering. Do you see Gosse? I rarely do. He is very much of a great man in London—but a kind one withal.

The last congratulatory letter was from my father's cousin Dr. Rendel Harris, the well-known Oriental scholar. It is dated 29 January 1921.

I am ashamed of myself to have left you without a salutation at a time when every one else was throwing up his hat and saying good old Mid-Victorian. I had no idea of your having touched 81, and here am I just entered on my 70th year. We are a long-lived family, for certain; and I too can claim to be a Victorian, if that is, as we two may assume, not

[1] As a matter of fact my father enjoyed the interview.

too far off from being a benediction. You know, until *The Times* and the rest came to the rescue, we always thought of you as enjoying the leisure, in life and in thought, of the 18th century. My hearty good wishes with this to my good cousin. I am sorry to hear that in some ways you are hedged about with infirmities; but 'twill pass; and the best is yet to be.

Early in 1921 my father's last volume of Essays, *Later Essays* was published. On 8 March 1921, Sir Edmund Gosse wrote what must have been one of his last letters to Austin Dobson:

I must tell you how much I have been enjoying your 'Later' (but I am sure not 'Latest') Essays. I will say no more, because they are the subject of my article in the ensuing 'Sunday Times' (March 13th).

The next letter refers to the same volume and it is perhaps appropriate that the last of the many letters reproduced in these chapters is from a friend of over forty years' standing. It is from Brander Matthews, the American professor and author, and is dated 9 April 1921:

I hasten to thank you for *Later Essays*—and more especially for the copy of verses I found in front of it.

It is forty-three years next summer since you and I first met and 'swore an eternal friendship'! Forty-three years—more than half of your life and almost two thirds of mine. And to me that friendship has been a precious possession.

I've read the book of course, and at once. I enjoyed more

particularly Mrs. Carter and Abbé Edgworth and most of all the heterogeny of 'infinitely repellent particles'.

I'm now writing a book review every Sunday for the *New York Times*, and I shall deal with you in good time, tempering justice with mercy. Six weeks ago I entered my seventieth year—and I find myself promoted from literature to journalism.

IN HIS GARDEN AT EALING
THE LAST PORTRAIT

X

A MISCELLANY

AUSTIN DOBSON'S first poem to appear in print was 'A City Flower', which was published in *Temple Bar* in December 1864. His last consisted of a few lines sent to Sir Edmund Gosse at Christmas 1920, which were printed, after the author's death, in the *London Mercury* for December 1921.

His first piece of prose appeared in the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* in January 1866, and was an article on Mademoiselle de Corday, which formed one of the four Essays afterwards published under the title of *Four Frenchwomen*. In the same year (1866) he also contributed a story, entitled 'Bob Trevor and I', to *Beeton's Annual: A Book for the Young*; but this was never reprinted in the Author's lifetime. It is now appended to this volume. Most of the Essays which he contributed to various periodicals subsequently found a place in book form, but there is one, the first of an intended series entitled 'The Sailors of Smollett', appearing in the *Nautical Magazine* of February 1872, which was neither reprinted nor apparently continued.

. . . . . .

The titles of Austin Dobson's books were on

the whole extraordinarily happy, in spite of the endless cogitation which they caused their author. I venture to think that so long as his memory remains green he will be remembered chiefly by his *Old-World Idylls*, *At the Sign of the Lyre*, and *The Ballad of Beau Brocade*, which title was, I may say, invented years before the novel *Beau Brocade* was published by the Baroness Orczy; and, as regards his prose, by *Eighteenth-Century Vignettes*. *Proverbs in Porcelain*—I refer to the edition illustrated by Sir Bernard Partridge—appears to have been a third choice. I am fortunate in possessing the corrected proof sheets of this volume, with a good deal of MS. matter interwoven. On the title-page is inscribed 'Dialogues in Dresden'. This is crossed through in ink and over the top is written in pencil 'Eclogues in Sèvres'. Both these titles were, however, ultimately rejected in favour of the familiar 'Proverbs'.

. . . . . .

This volume of proof sheets reminds me that my father, for some reason that I could never understand, used for many years three totally distinct types of handwriting. It is impossible to assign any of the three to any particular period of his life, because he was apt to confound the student by using two of them, at all events,

simultaneously. Most of his prose works, both biographies and essays, are in the familiar and unique copperplate handwriting (see illustration facing p. 176), which has been reproduced from time to time, and which, in spite of its apparent elaborateness, he could write with comparative rapidity, especially in his younger days, before he suffered from failing eyesight. Most of his manuscripts are intact, written on small quarto paper with half margins, and are really beautiful documents.

. . . . . .

Austin Dobson was fortunate in his illustrators. Although many people think he was in his happiest vein with Hugh Thomson, he was also associated with Sir Bernard Partridge, Randolph Caldecott, Kate Greenaway, Alfred Parsons, Fred Barnard and Edwin Abbey, not to mention the French etcher, A. Lalauze, and several other artists who illustrated his earlier contributions to periodicals like the *Saturday Journal*, *Evening Hours*, and *Good Words*. The opinion has been not infrequently expressed that his best illustrator was Edwin Abbey, and the latter's illustrations to the 'Ladies of St. James's' and other poems, which appeared in *Harper's Magazine*, are most beautiful examples of

black-and-white work. Probably few people, however, realize that one of his poems, 'Cupid's Alley', has been illustrated by an artist much younger than any of those mentioned—Mr. Arthur Rackham. This illustration, a wealth of detail, colour and artistry, hangs in the Tate Gallery, and when there was some idea of the Oxford University Press issuing a large-paper edition of the author's *Complete Poetical Works*, I obtained the artist's permission to reproduce this drawing, which had already appeared in the *Arthur Rackham Picture Book*. 'I am glad to hear,' he wrote, 'that your father's work in which I have such delight is to be adequately published. If you choose my drawing for the proposed limited edition I shall feel honoured by its association with such a rare collection of his work.' Unfortunately the project of the limited edition subsequently fell through, but I had already come to the conclusion that the necessary reduction of the picture would have robbed it of much of its charm.

Yet another, still more modern, artist, Mr. Kay Nielsen, has done a water-colour design to illustrate the poem 'The Ladies of St. James's'. I cannot leave the subject of my father's illustrators without referring to two paintings, which have been hung in the Royal Academy—one

by the late George H. Boughton, to illustrate the poem 'Love in Winter', in 1891, and the other, much later, by Frank Bramley, which was inscribed with the last lines from 'A Fancy from Fontenelle': 'The Rose is Beauty, the Gardener Time.'

. . . . . .

Talking of illustrations calls to mind a photograph from an American illustrated paper, which was kindly sent to me by Sir Edmund Gosse shortly after my father's death, representing a magnificent sculptured group, the 'Fountain of Time', which forms part of a great scheme for the decoration of the Midway Plaisance in Chicago. The group, which is the work of Lorado Taft, an American sculptor, represents the human procession passing before the figure of Time, 'a conception suggested'—I quote from the letterpress under the photograph—'by a couplet from Austin Dobson:

> Time goes, you say? Ah, no!
> Alas, Time stays. *We* go.'

The picture had been sent to Sir Edmund Gosse by an American lady, who knew that he was my father's closest friend.

'Perhaps,' she wrote, 'you have not seen the design I enclose. I wish your friend could know what he has done—

to write two lines that would serve to inspire such a group, and so help a nation. I think I was about sixteen years when I first learned that poem of Mr. Dobson's, and now I often find myself softly saying over the lines. Mr. Dobson will be inseparably connected with "The Fountain of Time", and, in a way, it will serve as a memorial to him.'

The lines quoted are taken from 'The Paradox of Time', and, as my father would have been the first to admit, although the lines are his, the idea underlying them was that of the poet Ronsard, whose words appear at the head of the poem:

> Le temps s'en va, le temps s'en va, madame!
> Las! le temps non: mais NOUS nous en allons!
>
> . . . . . .

Among the clubs of which Austin Dobson was a member may be mentioned the Athenaeum, the Authors' Club of New York, the Rowfant Club of Cleveland, Ohio, and the National Club, located until comparatively recently in Whitehall Gardens. It is to the last two that the following remarks relate.

From his correspondence I see that my father was made an honorary member of the Rowfant Club in 1896. From that date until right up to his death, he regularly received the announcements of their meetings, and other literature.

This club must be a delightful institution and

certainly knows the art of doing things well. Its notices are always printed on beautiful paper, sometimes in old missal script in colour, not infrequently illustrated, and are always couched in the most original and diverting language. In about the year 1909 my father gave me a lien on all literature received or to be received from this club, and I immediately began to make a careful collection; but I am afraid a good deal of matter received between 1896 and 1909 was destroyed. Nevertheless, my little collection contains some interesting items, including the club's Year Books, which are all worth preserving. Apart from their all being beautifully printed, for the most part on hand-made paper, they are nearly all in limited and numbered editions. The publication to which I used to look forward with most delight was the catalogue of the annual auction which was held among members, chiefly of Rowfant Club publications. All these catalogues are limited editions.

One of the notices of meetings—which, needless to say, always arrived after the meeting had been held—I particularly prize. I quote it in full:

> On the eighteenth day of January, 1910, Auſtin Dobſon, honorary member of the Rowfant Club, completed ſeventy years of noble ſervice in life and letters:
>
> Wherefore, on Saturday, the nineteenth day of November

1910, the Candles will be lighted in his ſpecial honour; and Joſeph Leon Gobeille will come from a far place to be his prophet to his brother Rowfanters, ſpeaking to them of Auſtin Dobſon, Poet and Penman.

Attached to the notice, as I received it from my father, was a characteristic letter from the lecturer, dated 6 December 1910:

My dear Friend,—Certainly the Dobson cult was out in full force on your night at the Rowfant Club and some bully books were shown. There are a lot of beautifully bound Dobsons in this country, especially the L.P. *Proverbs*.

Great 'bunches' of ante-mortem bays and roses were flung your way—not one that was undeserved however.

Write me a little letter about your health and life when you feel like it. With love and blessings.

Jos. Leon Gobeille.

The Rowfant Club has, of course, issued some beautiful books. I have one, which I bought at the sale of my father's books, entitled 'Bibliographical Notes on a collection of editions of the book known as "Puckle's Club" from the Library of a member of the Rowfant Club as shown at the Club House, March 1896. With an Introduction by Austin Dobson. Cleveland: The Rowfant Club, 1899'. The book, which is beautifully printed and sumptuously illustrated, contains an inscription: 'Mr. Austin Dobson—"The Intro-

duction's the thing."—Geo. W. Kohlmetz.' The latter was the owner of the collection. Subsequent to the purchase of the book, I was fortunate enough to find among my father's correspondence various letters from Mr. Kohlmetz, relating to this introduction, as well as a fine set of photographs of various rare editions of 'Puckle's Club' and their title-pages.

My father appears to have spent some extraordinarily happy hours at the National Club, which, from its then position in Whitehall Gardens, was conveniently situated for the Board of Trade a few doors away. For many years, even after his retirement from the public service in 1901, he used to frequent the club, especially on a particular day of the week—Wednesday, I think—when he could be sure of finding certain friends who formed a small coterie known as the 'Corner', a name originating, I believe, from the fact that the original members always occupied a corner between the fireplace and east window of the dining-room, gradually absorbing further tables as the members increased.

When I was binding up a collection of privately printed poems, &c., I came across one, of which during my father's lifetime I had been unaware. Although it was decided to exclude it

from the *Complete Poetical Works*, published by the Oxford University Press in 1923, it may not be out of place to reproduce it here. The notes appended are partly my own and partly those appearing on the original print of the verses.

A Whitehall Eclogue

Batemanaetas[1] *Pelhamoeus*[2] *A Critical Raven.*

Turpe est difficiles habere nugas,
Et stultus labor est ineptiarum!

Batemanaetas. Here, at this noonday hour, let us mingle our voices together.

Pelhamoeus. What shall we sing of? Boyle?[3] Or the Boers? Or the change in the weather?

Batemanaetas. Nay, there is Gosse his book, with its delicate scholarly phrasing;

There is a theme, in truth—if you truly desire to be praising!

Pelhamoeus. Many a cheek will tingle, and many a rival will burn, Sir!

Donne[4] has been done of yore, but now he is done to a turn, Sir!

The Raven. Croak!

Batemanaetas. Think of the toil unheard, and the numberless facts to be 'spotted'.

[1] Sir Alfred Bateman, K.C.M.G.

[2] The late Hon. T. H. W. Pelham, C.B.

[3] The late Sir Courtenay Boyle, Permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade.

[4] Sir Edmund Gosse's *Life of Donne*. ('Donne' was, and still should be, pronounced 'Dunne'.)

PELHAMOEUS. Think of the 't's' to be crossed, and the infinite 'i's' to be dotted!

THE RAVEN. Croak! Croak!!

BATEMANAETAS. Surely a work *per se*, and as modest in tone as pretension.

PELHAMOEUS. GOSSE should be made C.B.,[1] or at least have a Government Pension!

THE RAVEN. Croak! Croak!! Croak!!!

BATEMANAETAS. Pensioned he would be, too—were merit but duly regarded.

PELHAMOEUS. Ah! you may well say that. *Are not you and I both unrewarded*![2]

[*The Raven, with a cataract of croaks, flies off, disgusted, and is afterwards found dead on the Embankment.*]

Of this 'Eclogue' a Latin version was supplied by a friend and colleague of my father at the Board of Trade, the late R. T. Griffith, and I cannot refrain from reproducing it.

ECLOGA.

Batemanaetas. *Pelhamoeus.* *Corvus Criticus.*

Amant alterna Camoenae.

B. Hic licet in templo voces miscere sodali.

P. Quid canere? an Batavos, BOYLUMve, hiemisve rigores?

B. Non verum GOSSEM, et librum quem callidus edit,
Insignem, laude et dignum laudarier alta.

P. Aemulus at quali invidio nunc quisque tumebit!
DONUS enim, reliquis donum, nunc scriptus ADONE est!

[1] He was subsequently Sir Edmund Gosse, C.B.

[2] But they did not remain so; *vide* previous notes.

COR. *Koάξ!*

B. Rem quanto ingenio tetigit, quantoque labore!

P. Litera quaeque exstat, necdum nota deficit una!

COR. *Koάξ! Koάξ!!*

B. Magnum opus est per se; tenuat neque turbidus auctor.

P. Dignus homo est famae, certe et dignissimus auri.

COR. *Koάξ! Koάξ!! Koάξ!!!*

B. Fama, aurumque, aderunt,—sequitur si fama merentem.

P. Non, inquam, sequitur! desit dum gloria nobis.

[*Exit corvus magno cum clamore; deinde in fluminis margine mortuus invenitur.*]

The whole was privately printed in quarto form (fifty copies, at the Chiswick Press) by Sir Edmund Gosse (who kindly allowed me to reprint it here), primarily for distribution among the 'Understanders,' whose names are printed on the back of the poem. I give them as they then appeared:

Arthur W. Anstruther.
Gerald A. Arbuthnot.
Hon. Maurice Baring.
Alfred E. Bateman, C.M.G.
Rev. J. Fitzherbert Bateman.
Hall Caine.
W. Chauncey Cartwright, C.M.G.
Major P. G. Craigie.
T. H. Elliott, C.B.
Isaac N. Ford.
Maurice Hewlett.
Sir Charles M. Kennedy, K.C.M.G.
The Earl of Lytton.
Edward Marsh.
Horace C. Monro.
W. E. Norris.
Gilbert Parker.
Sydney Pawling.
Hon. T. H. W. Pelham.

Hansom W. Fraser.
Edmund Gosse.
William Heinemann.
J. M. W. van der Poorten Schwartz.
Arthur Waugh.

These names give a clue to some, at all events, of the members of the 'Corner' to which I have drawn attention above. Many of them have now crossed the great divide.

. . . . . .

Mention of the Board of Trade recalls a point of interest, for which I am indebted to Mr. R. J. Lister, I.S.O., for many years librarian of the Board of Trade, an old friend of my father and a very kind one to me, especially when I first entered the Civil Service.

It appears that in one of the rooms at the Board of Trade—I refer to 7 Whitehall Gardens, from which the Department has now moved to Great George Street—at one time occupied by my father, in his early days, there is a window on which is scratched with a diamond: 'Austin Dobson. In the year of his captivity XXVII. 1883.' At the time of writing the inscription was still there.

. . . . . .

Although I am content for the most part to leave appreciation of my father's workmanship in other hands, I am bound to confess my admiration

of his extraordinary knack of writing lines apropos of an occasion. There are two examples, for the first of which I am indebted to Sir Edmund Gosse, and I therefore take the liberty of quoting his words:

> Austin Dobson's humour worked with great rapidity. Here is an instance known, I think, only to myself. In May 1889, the Harbour Department of the Board of Trade issued some order or request to the Northern ports. This was received in silence, except by the harbour authorities of Portmahomack, which is, I think, in Ross-shire, who wrote a very solemn letter saying, 'We heartily homologate with the wishes of the Harbour Department'. Pelham[1] received this letter, and rushed joyously with it into Dobson's room, where I happened to be. Without any hesitation, Dobson remarked:
>
> All nations have a way or groove
> In which they propositions state;
> When Scotchmen thoroughly approve
> They 'heartily homologate.'

The second example is somewhat different. On 10 August 1907, a letter came from William Heinemann, the publisher, in which he explained that he was about to bring out a 'very beautiful edition' of *Alice in Wonderland*, illustrated by Arthur Rackham. The book had just gone out of copyright, and Mr. Heinemann was anxious to send out his new edition to the public with a few

[1] *Vide supra* (footnotes).

graceful lines, which he was convinced my father was the proper person to write. The latter was naturally a member of the Tenniel school, although he had already realized the grace and genius of the younger artist, of whom I have already spoken above. It will be understood, therefore, that my father evinced some alarm at the publisher's request. I can well remember the arrival of the letter and my father's immediate decision that the thing could not be done. But I also remember the period of silence that followed, when to the initiated it was perfectly obvious from the twinkle in his eye that he was fast following a poetic trail. I think I am right in saying that in a few minutes he recited the lines reproduced below from his *Complete Poetical Works*. At all events, I fancy it was sent off that night, for in a letter dated 13 August 1907, Mr. Heinemann wrote:

> This is simply magnificent. It is just the thing, and it is a miracle to me how you have touched it off so quickly and so happily.

A Proem.

(To Mr. Arthur Rackham's edition of *Alice in Wonderland*.)

'Tis two-score years since Carroll's art,
With topsy-turvy magic,
Sent Alice wandering through a part
Half-comic and half tragic.

Enchanting Alice! Black-and-white
Has made your charm perennial;
And nought save 'Chaos and old Night'
Can part you now from Tenniel;

But still you are a Type, and based
In Truth, like Lear and Hamlet;
And Types may be re-draped to taste
In cloth of gold or camlet.

Here comes a fresh Costumier then;
That Taste may gain a wrinkle
From him who drew with such deft pen
The rags of Rip Van Winkle.

A few weeks later Mr. Heinemann wrote again: 'I enclose a small cheque for the Alice "Proem", with many thanks to you for so willingly helping me. I have made it out on the basis of Byron's guinea-a-line and I only wish there were more of 'em.' Perhaps I may add my father's reply, from a copy which, with the rest of the correspondence and proof sheets, is in my L.P. Edition (given to me by my father to commemorate my entry into the Civil Service).

My Dear Heinemann,—This is munificent! Who shall say that the best literary traditions are not maintained at Bedford Street? There is a tradition that in a similar case Goldsmith *returned* the money. But the story wants confirmation, and I therefore do not propose to follow that precedent. Sincerely hoping that the verses may adequately serve their turn, I remain, &c.

I record these last two letters for a very particular reason. People have an inquisitive habit of wondering, after an author's death, what he was paid for his work in his lifetime. As my father's executor, I have made it my business to know probably more than any man living about his literary affairs. This was a generous fee, I suppose, for sixteen lines, reeled off in a few minutes, and was perhaps more than the normal price, but let it not be thought that my father was ever overpaid for his poetry. I could write much on the subject but—well, I am glad to think that his future now, at long last, lies in the safe hands of Mr. Humphrey Milford at the Oxford University Press (he always had dreams of being included among the 'Oxford Poets') with its peculiarly restful address of 'Amen Corner'.[1]

. . . . . .

In these days when, as Mr. Spencer, the well-known bookseller of New Oxford Street, confesses in a book on his forty years of book-selling, he had to pay £102 at Sotheby's for a first edition of Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights*—incidentally it was a copy given to me by my father in one of his frequent moments of generosity—it would be

[1] This was written before the move to Amen House, Warwick Square.

idle to suggest that any of my father's published works could be regarded as valuable in the ordinary accepted term. Nevertheless it may be of interest to indicate one or two which are certainly scarce.

In 1883 there appeared *Old-World Idylls*, and in 1885 the companion volume, *At the Sign of the Lyre*. Of the former there was a large-paper issue, in paper covers, of 50 copies, and of the latter a similar large-paper issue of 75 copies. In all the years that I have searched for the rarer of my father's works, I have never until quite recently come across a copy of either large-paper edition in any bookseller's catalogue in this country.

In 1890 Messrs. Dodd, Mead & Co., of New York, published *Horace Walpole—A Memoir*, in various limited editions. The 425 copies on Dickinson paper were intended for England as well as America, but 40 of the 50 copies on Japan paper were appropriated for America, likewise the whole of the edition of 5 copies on Van Gelder paper and 4 copies on vellum. These last three issues are very scarce, and the copy I possess of the Japan paper edition was purchased at the sale of my father's books in 1922. In 1893 the same book was published in cheaper form in England and there was a limited edition of 50 copies, which I have only once or twice seen for sale.

In 1891, although it is dated 1890, there appeared a large-paper edition of *Four Frenchwomen*, limited to 50 copies. I have only once seen a copy of this for sale, although I am fortunate in possessing two copies myself, one of them beautifully extra-illustrated.

In 1895 appeared an edition of 750 copies of *Poems on Several Occasions*, and there was also a more limited edition of 200, both editions being intended for England and America. Both of these are met with from time to time, but there were two further editions, of a more special character, each of them being limited to 50 copies, which were published in America only. Both issues are in my collection.

The other limited editions that appeared of various books, both poetry and prose, are not hard to come by, although it is not so easy to find a copy of the privately printed *Carmina Votiva* of 1901, or the verses for the Omar Khayyám Club dinner of 1897, privately printed for Sir Edmund Gosse. There were only 100 copies of the latter, of which 3 were on Japanese vellum.

Among the most rare of all Austin Dobson items is *The Garland of Rachel* by 'Austin Dobson and divers kindly hands', of which there was only one copy with this title. It is of course too well

known to describe here, but my father's copy was sold at his book sale, and I shall never cease to regret the fact that I failed to secure it against a bidder the depth of whose purse appeared fathomless.

Probably the rarest publication of all, however, was a privately printed pamphlet regarding the authorship of the poem 'The Drama of the Doctor's Window'. The subject-matter of the pamphlet has been briefly dealt with by Sir Edmund Gosse in Chapter II.[1] Only a few copies were distributed to friends, some of which were returned subsequently, and the balance is now in safe custody. No doubt a few copies, half a dozen at most, are still at large, but only one,[2] to my knowledge, has ever been offered for sale. It belonged to the late Colonel W. F. Prideaux, and how he obtained it is a mystery. When it appeared in the sale catalogue of his books at Sotheby's my father managed to have it withdrawn, and purchased it privately from the executors, so anxious was he to prevent it getting into circulation, merely to avoid a story, which is now well known, giving pain to any of those concerned who might still be living.

I have made no mention of any of the ordinary

[1] See p. 24.

[2] Sir E. Gosse's copy has since been sold at Sotheby's.

editions of my father's works, as none of them can be regarded as rare, but it is not always realized that there are three distinct issues of the first edition of *The Ballad of Beau Brocade*, all of which are faithfully described in Mr. F. E. Murray's admirable Bibliography. Secondly, many of the second edition of *Proverbs in Porcelain* (1878) were burned at a fire at the publishers', and a copy is not often seen for sale. Thirdly, Mr. Murray mentions a copy of *Eighteenth Century Vignettes*, First Series, apparently printed from the American blocks, but bearing the English publisher's imprint, and in a grey-green binding.[1] Only a few copies were struck off for copyright purposes.

. . . . . .

It was only once or twice that Austin Dobson sat for his portrait. The first occasion of any importance was when he sat to G. F. Watts, R.A., in 1884. (See illustration facing p. 124.) This was a black-and-white oil portrait, and—I think I am right in saying—was commissioned by the *Century Magazine*. At all events it was reproduced as the frontispiece to that magazine for October 1884. The original was supposed to be in the offices of the *Century* in New York, but could

[1] I obtained a copy when Mr. Murray's wonderful Austin Dobson collection was sold at Sotheby's in 1924.

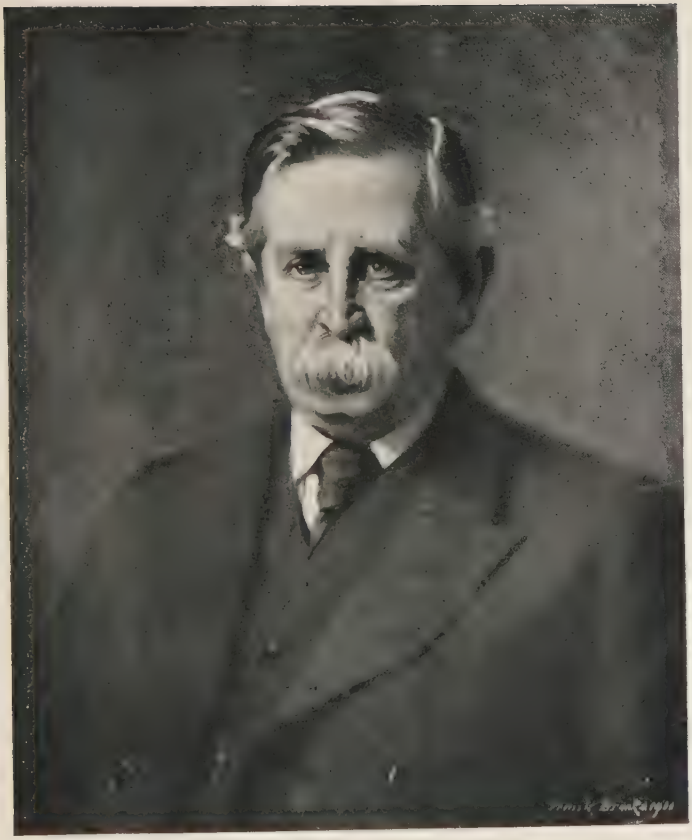
not be traced when inquiry was made for it a year or two ago. It may be regarded as an excellent portrait at the time it was done.

In 1894 or 1895 he also sat to William Strang, R.A., who did an etching which was reproduced as a frontispiece to *Poems on Several Occasions*, published in England and America in 1895. Although this is undoubtedly characteristic of the artist and his work, it is not too happy a portrait, as the poet was obviously not in the best of health at the time.

In 1907 he was painted by Miss Sylvia Gosse, the daughter of his old friend, Sir Edmund Gosse, and this portrait, which is in oils and quite small, was presented by Sir Edmund to the National Portrait Gallery.

In 1908 the largest and perhaps most important portrait was painted by Mr. Frank Brooks. Before the original[1] was completed a copy was painted from life for the sitter. This copy is considered by the family to be, on the whole, a very good likeness. A photogravure reproduction is in the National Portrait Gallery, and the actual painting has now been presented to that institution. A reproduction from the photogravure will be found opposite.

[1] This is now in the possession of the Rev. C. C. Dobson.



AUSTIN DOBSON IN 1911

From a portrait by Frank Brooks

Lastly, in 1914, Mr. W. H. Caffyn did a crayon drawing which formed the frontispiece of a volume of selected Essays included by Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons in their 'Wayfarer' Library. The original drawing is in my possession.

My father was of course photographed on many occasions, and he undoubtedly had the temperament for an ideal sitter. Even so, it must be comparatively rarely that any one leaves behind so excellent a portrait as that taken by Messrs. Walter Barnett & Co., of Knightsbridge, which forms the frontispiece of the *Complete Poetical Works* in the 'Oxford Poets' Series and of this volume.

The last photograph to be taken was a snapshot of the poet taken in his garden at Ealing early in 1921, the year of his death. This will be found facing p. 212.

It remains in conclusion to say a word as to caricatures. Apart from one or two of a rather personal nature done by Edwin Abbey and Hugh Thomson, which have never been reproduced, there are only two, so far as I am aware, that can command serious attention. Both are by the hand of Mr. Max Beerbohm. The earlier is to be found in *The Poets' Corner*, issued in 1904, and shows the poet seated at a desk

upon a high stool composing lyrics with the aid of Edmund Gosse, who stands looking over his shoulder. In the background enters the trim figure of the late Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, the then President of the Board of Trade, in which Department both the others were employed. The later caricature shows a group of the Academic Committee of the Royal Society of Literature, wondering when they shall hold their next meeting and what on earth to put on the agenda.

. . . . . .

On 18 January 1910, on his seventieth birthday, Austin Dobson was the recipient of a very delightful presentation of silver, of late eighteenth-century design, from some ninety of his friends and admirers. I venture to reproduce the letter that accompanied the gift:

DEAR MR. AUSTIN DOBSON,—It is hard to realize that you complete your seventieth year to-day, but we take the opportunity to assure you of our constant admiration and affection.

We greet in you the brilliant lyrical poet and the fastidious writer of prose.

We are rejoiced to know that you are still as eager as ever in the pursuit of literary perfection, and we confidently hope that you have before you many years of honourable activity.

In asking you to accept the birthday gift which accompanies this letter, we beg you to believe that it is but a small

token of the esteem with which you are regarded, not merely by your many personal friends, but by an ever-widening circle of readers.

We are, dear Mr. Austin Dobson,

Very faithfully yours,

Alfred E. Bateman.	Henry James.
James Fitzmaurice-Kelly.	Lytton.
Edmund Gosse.	P. Chalmers Mitchell.
Maurice Hewlett.	Arthur Waugh.

Perhaps I may add the reply:

My dear Waugh,—A friend of ours, who is also a member of your committee, suggests to me that a 'copy of verses' would be the most appropriate response to the unexpected birthday present and congratulations which reached me yesterday. But I frankly confess that the gift, both by its manner and its nature, seems completely to have sealed my sources of invention. Nor can I believe that the case justifies either conventional language or the vocabulary of artifice. If I may parody myself:

> Who ever heard plain Truth relate
> Its throbbing Thought in 'six' and 'eight';
> Or felt his manly Bosom swell
> Beneath a French-made Villanelle?

No: here simple prose is surely better. I am touched—more deeply indeed than I care to say—by this unlooked-for evidence of goodwill, which, I feel, I have received rather than deserved.

I ask you to thank warmly all those who have joined in this delightful surprise for their most cordial words; and to assure them that their beautiful salver, rose-bowl, and candlesticks, so suggestive in form and fashion of the eigh-

teenth century, will be faithfully and reverently preserved by myself and my family.

Believe me,
My dear Waugh,
Yours sincerely,
AUSTIN DOBSON.

. . . . . .

I have throughout the pages of this little volume quoted different poems written to or dedicated to my father. Of these there were an immense number, by divers hands, sufficient almost to form a separate volume by themselves. But this record would be incomplete without a reference to Sir Edmund Gosse's 'Dedication to Austin Dobson' which first appeared in book form, in his *Firdausi in Exile*, published in 1885, and in which he expresses the hope

> That perchance when both are gone
> Neither may be named alone.

Other poems of this kind may also be mentioned. One is by Richard Watson Gilder, and is to be found in his *Poems and Inscriptions*, published by the Century Company, New York, in 1901. Another is by Frank Dempster Sherman, and is included in his *Madrigals and Catches*, published by White, Stokes and Allen, New York, in 1887. Yet a third appears in *Ballads and other*

Rhymes of a Country Bookworm by Thomas Hutchinson, London, 1888. A fourth by the French poet, Joseph Boulmier, is reproduced below:

A mon ami Austin Dobson

Paris, 16 Mai 1879.

Remercîment pour l'envoi de son charmant volume:

Proverbs in Porcelain

Je suis riche en porcelaine;
D'où me vient ce cher présent?
A Dobson j'en dois l'étrenne.

La faïence plébéienne
Était mon lot; à présent
Je suis riche en porcelaine.

Non, jamais pareille aubaine
Ne m'advint en un moment:
A Dobson j'en dois l'étrenne.

On viendra chez moi sans peine
Prendre le thé maintenant:
Je suis riche en porcelaine.

Ce soir, j'attends mon Hélène:
Si j'obtiens un doux serment,
A Dobson j'en dois l'étrenne.

Ta rage, ô Zoïle, est vaine:
Ce 'Japon' n'est point cassant.
Je suis riche en porcelaine;
A Dobson j'en dois l'étrenne.

JOSEPH BOULMIER.

. . . . . .

I suppose that in the case of all authors, there must be in existence somewhere one or two specially embellished or otherwise exceptional copies of their works. There are four such volumes of Austin Dobson's which are perhaps worthy of mention.

The first is a copy of *Old-World Idylls* which was presented to Lawrence Barrett, the American actor, on the occasion of a dinner given in his honour by Edwin Abbey and Alfred Parsons on 3 April 1884. There were present: John Sargent, Austin Dobson, George du Maurier, Henry James, Linley Sambourne, Sir John Robinson, Archibald Forbes, W. Q. Orchardson, and W. S. Gilbert. The copy of the volume was enriched with a number of drawings, as follows—I quote from p. 139 of E. V. Lucas's *Life of Edwin Abbey*, vol. i:

> Abbey began it by drawing on one of the fly leaves; Alfred Parsons supplied a floral decoration; Alma Tadema made a portrait of Autonoë, the Greek girl, in whose honour a club has been founded in America; and Leighton, Millais, Caldecott, Sambourne, du Maurier, and other artists also contributed.

I have no idea where the volume is now, but, as Mr. Lucas remarks, it 'should be a very precious possession'.

The second volume is a copy of the privately printed *Carmina Votiva*, 1901, which owed its birth to the enthusiasm and energy of Sir Edmund Gosse. The particular volume in question is Sir Edmund's own copy and is interleaved with original manuscripts of nearly all the poems comprised in it.

The third volume is one of which the only record I have is an extract from an American booksellers' catalogue. It is a copy of *Horace Walpole—A Memoir*, one of the four copies on vellum (which never came to this country), and is extra illustrated by the insertion of the original drawings by Léon Moran, who was one of the illustrators of the volume, and also has a set of the illustrations in three states.

The fourth volume—which may I think justly be accorded a place in this select category—is a large quarto volume bound in three quarter dark blue levant morocco with vellum sides, containing my father's original manuscript poems. The poems are arranged in the order in which they appear in the *Complete Poetical Works*; [1] and although there are a number of gaps, it would be difficult on the whole, I think, to find so unique a volume. This volume is in my possession.

. . . . . .

[1] Published by the Oxford University Press.

It has been observed elsewhere that Austin Dobson seemed very felicitous in the poetical inscriptions with which he so frequently adorned the volumes presented to his friends. A number of these inscriptions have been recorded in different chapters of this volume, but I take this opportunity of adding a few more, which have not been reprinted in the Author's own works.

The first is to be found in a volume of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, presented to Edwin A. Abbey.[1]

> I can read *Goldsmith*, Ah! but you,
> Dear Friend, can read and draw him too.
> You, with a pen as keen as fine
> Make maidenhood seem more divine;
> More comely middle age; and throw
> A ray from Heaven on locks of snow.

The second consists of some lines to Hugh Thomson, written on a dinner menu composed by my father for an occasion in February 1909, when the Hugh Thomsons came to Ealing to dinner.

To Hugh Thomson.

> A man in hew all hews in his controwling
> SHAKESPEARE, Sonnet XX.
>
> In black and white we now and then
> Contrive, in some imperfect way,
> To hint the things we hope to say,—

[1] See E. V. Lucas, *Life of Edwin Abbey*, vol. i, p. 139.

And sometimes with a hopeless pen!
Expression is beyond our ken;
We speak not as we should, but may,
In black and white.

Not so with you, thrice blest of men!
Your thoughts must be as clear as day;—
You see the shapes that you portray,
And make them move and live again
In black and white.

On the back of the menu is written:

On the ingenious Mr. H–GH TH–MS–N, in the manner of Mr. PRIOR

There 's one thing that I can't make out,
Said Dick (who loves his pun),
If Heu (in latin) means a-lass!
How is he then Tom's son?

In the original copy of the menu, in my father's own handwriting, there is another, in the same vein, which reads:

Heu pietas, heu prisca fides. HORACE.
With strength we link Leonidas
And valour with Alcides.
With Hugh 'tis always pietas
Or else! 'tis prisca Fides.

There are several more to Hugh Thomson, but the following is of interest because it bears upon an experiment which the artist successfully carried out in 1916, in the drawing of silhouettes of

eighteenth-century characters. Three of these were reproduced in *A Bookman's Budget* published in 1917, and one will be found facing p. 204.

The lines are headed 'A Caveat' and run:

> This cleverly constructed 'Shade'
> Was by a skilful artist made—
> Hugh Thomson, whose illustrious name
> Dwells in the megaphone of Fame.
> He based it on the profile true
> That honest WILLIAM HOGARTH drew,
> From mem'ry, 1762.
> Witness my hand and seal hereto.

Through the kindness of Mr. M. Buxton Forman, a son of my father's old friend of that name, my attention has been called to the following, written in a copy of Mr. George Saintsbury's *History of Elizabethan Literature* (Macmillan, 1887):

To my peculiar Friend, Mr. G. S., of his Book.

> Could I pretend (but I'm too wise)
> This Book of thine to analyse,
> I should put first the just discerning—
> A trifle 'sicklied o'er with learning';
> (Perchance in this you'll say that I'm
> A trifle sicklied o'er with rhyme;)
> Then next the steady critic grip
> That lets no side or subject slip;

And last (I speak without profanity),
Its forthright, ever-present sanity.
These things, my S., while you can give,
With you (in metaphor) I'll live!

June 1, '87.

Most of the inscription poems to Sir Edmund Gosse, appearing in the published catalogue of his library, also have their place in the *Complete Poetical Works*; but the following, inscribed in a little bound volume[1] of proof sheets of one of the later sections of Collected Poems entitled *Ludibria Ventis*, does not. The donor has appended to a proof portrait rather an indifferent signature and the lines read:

Note (to the Signature).

This signature was written when
His age was nigh threescore and ten.
The ink was poor, the paper flaky,
The writing's therefore somewhat shaky:
These things conspired to make it so,—
But not decrepitude. Oh! no.

Martinus Scriblerus.

In a volume presented to Mr. and Mrs. G. F. Watts, the following lines, dated 13 August 1894, occur:

Verses of mine, beyond your worth
To-day your transmigration seems,
Since you depart from common earth
Into the Paradise of Dreams.

[1] See p. 195.

In a commonplace book of my father's, which recently came into my possession, a number of other 'book' inscriptions are to be found. I quote the following:

For Mrs. Locker's copy of *Proverbs in Porcelain* (1877).

Too happy leaves! All winds that blow
Will toss your brethren to and fro:
And some will fade, and some be lost;
And some be nipped of critic frost;—
But you, at least, will find a home
Where cold and envy never come.

May, 1877.

Sent to Mrs. R. W. Gilder, on 9. 2. 80, with a copy of the second edition of *Proverbs in Porcelain*.

The JAY, we know, was thought absurd
Who tricked himself like JUNO's bird:
And yet it seemed—in packing up
MY stiff aesthetic buttercup—
I'd e'en be JAY and CROW together
To wear a certain peacock's feather![1]

To Alfred Parsons.

Painter of flowers, alas! what flowers of song
Can bloom for you, to whom Earth's flowers belong!—
To whom the blush-rose and the primrose both,
Have taught the charm and secret of their growth:

[1] The 'peacock's' feather was Mrs. Gilder's design for the back of her husband's poems.

Yet—Take the book.[1] If somewhere fresh and green
The leaves appear, lay lavender between.
Nov. 19, 1883.

. . . . . .

A considerable number of my father's poems have at one time or another been set to music. Since my father's death, as the Executor responsible for looking after his literary estate, I have made a point of always getting a copy of every such musical setting. I also found among my father's papers a collection of songs, but I doubt very much whether this collection is a complete one, even up to his death.

I have definite records of at least forty-three published settings. Composers seem to find 'A Song of the Four Seasons' the best for their purpose, for that has been set no less than fifteen times, and by, among others, such well-known composers as Frances Allitsen, Charles Willeby, Luard Selby and Sir Henry Hadow, who is also responsible for a very delightful setting of 'The Milkmaid', which has been set four times. 'Phyllida, my Phyllida' ('The Ladies of St. James's') has at least three musical settings, the most popular perhaps being that of Teresa del Riego, and the most recent, that of Sir F. Cowen. Perhaps the most comprehensive setting of any poem is the

[1] Probably *Old-World Idylls*.

Musical Idyll of Mme Liza Lehmann, entitled 'Good-night, Babette!', but the lines that occur in that poem, 'Once at the Angelus', have been set on four occasions, including once by Arthur Somervell.

Another popular poem is 'The Child Musician', which has been set five times, including once by Samuel Liddle; and I must not forget a Madrigal to Queen Victoria, set to music, in a volume of Choral Songs (1899), by Sir Hubert Parry. The other musical settings of which I possess copies or records are perhaps less important, and the latest one to reach me (1927) is what I believe to be the first setting of 'The Curé's Progress'.

. . . . . .

Austin Dobson was married in 1868, and in that year went to live at 10 Belmont Villas, Campden House Road, Kensington. In 1872 he moved to 10 Redcliffe Street, South Kensington, and in 1879 to Ealing. For two or three years he occupied 13 Grange Park, and finally, in 1882, he moved to 75 Eaton Rise, where he resided until his death.

. . . . . .

In the opening paragraphs of chapter V it was stated that it was not proposed, for the reasons there given, to include in this volume, except to a

very limited extent, any of my father's own letters. The conclusion of this chapter affords an opportunity of printing one or two selected letters which have been gathered from various sources.

The first is a very early letter written by the poet when he was twenty, to his little sister Fanny. It is dated London, 10 December 1860, and as it contains illustrations, a facsimile is to be found opposite. It reads:

My Dear Fanny Catherine Lise

I am obliged to write all your three names because it is such a very long while since I wrote to you that I cannot tell which of them you like to be called by. I suppose Mama has told you that I am coming down to see you after Christmas Day and to stay a week which you know is seven whole days? I want you to write if you can and tell me what you would like me to bring out of the fine shops I pass every day —Would you like a book of Fairy tales about the little wee men and women who sleep all day in the bells of the flowers and at night dance polkas and waltzes like Jimmy[1] does you know—all in the moonlight? You need not look out of window to-night to try and see them because it is too cold now and they would get pains in their backs and arms, like poor old granny[2] has. Or about the poor man who had such a long long heavy nose that he could not walk without having two strong men to carry it like this (illustration)? He

[1] The poet's brother, the late Mr. James Dobson, M.Inst.C.E.

[2] 'Old Granny' was the mother of the man who looked after the farm and garden at the writer's home at Holyhead.

has got his pocket handkerchief in his hand. It is a very large one, you see, but when he had a cold he wore out forty every day or more than you and Willie and Papa and Mama and Baker[1] have got altogether. Or would you like a little tea-set or a dinner-set or anything else? You will have a long time to think about it—but mind you can only have one of these things. Will you ask Willie what he would like and tell me? What do you do with yourself all day? I sit all day in a large room with a great ink bottle and many pens and write in a great book. My master is a tall man with a great beard like Great Agrippa's in Willy's book. He does not pinch me tho', but I think he would like to put me into his ink bottle sometimes—only I am too large and his bottle is not so large as Agrippa's. In the evening when you are in bed I draw pictures or else I take my gun and go and play at soldiers. My gun is very large, and I look like this (illustration). Sometimes I read fairy-tales do you know, last Saturday I had a friend to tea and we read Oh! such funny fairy tales. That reminds me that it will soon be Christmas day when there are lots of fairies about—Mind you are very good, and be sure before you eat your plum pudding that little Tom Thumb isn't hidden somewhere in it because if you bite him in two pieces he will die.

Please give my love to Mamma and Papa and all the rest and Believe me

my dear little sister
Your affectionate Brother
AUSTIN DOBSON.

The next letter was written by Austin Dobson to his eldest daughter. The family were away on

[1] 'Baker' was the old family nurse.

a holiday, but the writer of the letter had returned home in advance:

Under the Rhubarb.

My Dear Miss Mary, June 17th 1882.

As my worthy and respected Master has come this evening to Ealing, I take this opportunity of informing you that my beloved partner is no more. The strawberry leaves grew so high after you left that we did not meet as often as usual, and I soon remarked that she looked languid and seemed to feel the loneliness. As the Canterbury Bells came out, she grew worse, and remarked to me in a very melancholy tone that she 'feared they were ringing her knell'. After this there came a great change; she remained hours together by the Kitchen grating and did not say a word, but sometimes opened her mouth as if to speak, and then gave a long sigh. I tried to cheer her up, by pointing out the roses on Master Arthur's tree; but she only sighed again. The day the seventh rose came out, she crawled into the centre of the grass, and there Mr. Messer found her. She was quite dead. I fear she is buried in the dust-hole. This indeed my dear young lady is a vale of tears! I had looked for some fifty years of placid happiness with my poor darling, for you know we tortoises live a long time. I had a maiden aunt where I came from who was one hundred and sixty-five, and quite girlish when she was taken. Please give my love to your kind Mama, and poor little Cyril and the rest. Please come back soon, for I am very very lonely. And the Canterbury bells are falling and the roses are fading away.

Your affectionate friend,

The Surviving Tortoise.

The remaining letters are all selected from those addressed to Sir Edmund Gosse. The friendship

between these two began in April, 1874, and the last meeting between them took place at Ealing only a month or so before my father entered upon his last illness.

Throughout the whole of that long friendship there was a continuous exchange of letters on every conceivable topic, and, when Sir Edmund was kind enough to let me examine the large parcel of my father's letters, I realized that they, in conjunction with Sir Edmund's letters to my father, would make a considerable volume by themselves. Many of them are, however, of a somewhat intimate character, or deal with contemporary matters and are such as my father certainly never intended to appear in print at a later date. Moreover, as has already been made clear, this is not a critical study of the author or of his work, and I therefore content myself with quoting the following two or three selected letters, as each of them deals with some special topic.

The first letter, dated 20 October 1896, is chosen, because it throws light upon the writer's methods in the selection and working up of themes for his Essays.

It is rather difficult to point out precisely what are 'novelties' in the new *Vignettes*.[1] If I were conceited, I

[1] *Eighteenth Century Vignettes*, Third Series, 1896.

should say—following Lowell on Chaucer—that it is not the subject treated but myself that is the new thing. Before I wrote *Fielding's Library*, however, no one knew that Fielding had a Library; and the few writers on Puckle have confessed that they knew little of Puckle, whereas I have brought together a considerable amount about him which has never been brought together before. Those, too, who have seen the Auction Catalogue of Mead's Library would be puzzled to tell how I had possibly contrived to make an article on it; and the paper on *Polly Honeycombe* is an excursion (as none is better aware than yourself) into entirely unworked ground. Of my general point of view you have read something in the 'prologue'; but as you give me free invitation, I will add something more as to my method. This consists in taking some book which from lapse of time is a dead thing to the modern reader. I practically annotate such parts of it as I treat, making the obscure intelligible. Thus, in Grosley's *Londres*, he says he saw a picture by Reynolds of a lady sacrificing to the graces. I find out who the lady was, and all about her (p. 70). He says he saw Foote at the Haymarket. I show that he did not see Foote, but heard G. A. Stevens lecturing upon 'Heads' (p. 66). He tells of a member of Parliament who only spoke once about a broken window; I explain that it was Ferguson of Pitfour, of whom I give anecdotes (p. 74). The book is sown thickly with similar illustrations. Everybody knows Lord Byron was let off; but nobody but a reader of the *London Chronicle* and a fanatic of the *Superflu* could add that he 'went away comfortably in a chair to his own house in Mortimer Street'. Almost every note has some story of this kind, the result of a kind of fortunate *flair* that has grown expert from constant application to limited areas.

There is self praise for you! But I am painfully reminded in looking over these papers of the unconscionable amount of trouble taken to achieve a result which I fear can never be appreciated. I may add that I rather value—as mere ingenuity—the pages in *Mead's Library* (pp. 44, 48) on books wh: suggest other books. This is an amazingly egotistic letter. *Mais vous l'avez voulu, Georges Dandin, vous l'avez voulu!*

I was very grateful to you to-day for your visit, and sympathetic consolation.

The following relates to a dedication. It is dated November 1899:

'Time driveth onward fast,' and I perceive that I have never yet dedicated a volume of these papers to you. And yet it must be nearly a quarter of a century since we first began to interchange ideas—a long time to have watched 'les étoiles qui filent!' Will you accept these 'Miscellanies' in memory of those detached and delightful hours (between Ambition and Despair!) when we have sometimes loved Books for their own sake, careless alike of those who wrote and those who write about them?

The volume referred to was *A Paladin of Philanthropy, and other Papers* published in 1899, and this letter with slight variations formed the dedication to that volume.

In the summer of 1902 my father was busy completing his *Samuel Richardson* for the English Men of Letters Series, and from a note by Sir Edmund Gosse it is evident that the various in-

stalments of that life were read aloud to the latter at intervals. I find two cards, the first as follows:

Blue Peruke
Ealing
6. vi. 1902.
Arrive about *four*
MANLIUS PENNIALINUS

the second:

To-day, at Four,
Arrives the Bore
13. vi. 1902 CRISPINUS

At the base of the latter is Sir Edmund's note 'Richardson reading'.

The next letter which is undated (but the envelope is marked 19 October 1908) contains an appreciation of one of Sir Edmund's books:

Your book reached me at breakfast this morning; and I have been reading it ever since. There is in it all your old colour and melody, as seductive as ever; with perhaps (as you doubtless intend), a larger measure of autumn tints. Going back, I find I like 'The Bust'; 'The Train of Life'; 'Dunster Mill' (very much!); 'Butcher's Row'; and 'Rosemary' (charming!); all the sonnets from p. 49 to 53; 'R.B.', 'J.A.S.' and 'R.L.S.' especially, also 'Social Revolution'. But you are a master of the sonnet; and the last named might have come from Matthew Arnold. Of the remainder I recall—'Aubrey de Vere', 'John Ruskin', the 'Mountain Manœuvres', the second 'Omariana', and the 'Epilogue'. These are all at present; but I have not had the book many

hours; and your variety has troubled my palate. I shall know more when I get back to Town on Thursday. Meanwhile I wish you every success!

The next letter dated 17 June 1912 congratulates Sir Edmund upon his C.B.

By some accident, I only heard of your latest honour on Saturday evening. I congratulate you most heartily, with the reserva[tion] that you need no distinction except the highest: Had you been but a Peer, My dear, Had you been but a Peer! A literary man who, like yourself, has long earned his spurs, may dispense with the accolade. He is, to my thinking, like a fine engraving, finest without the letters. Yet, on second thoughts, a literary man, without letters, would be a contradiction in terms! So all is for the best, in the best possible world; and 'The Corner'[1] must add a leaf to its Laurels. I hope to see you on Friday. My best regards to Mrs. Gosse.

I have already intimated elsewhere that my father was at his best by his own fireside and on the whole disliked being away from home and his books. This view is supported by the following, dated 27 November 1913, from a well-known Hydro, where he had gone in search of relief at all events from his arthritis:

Many thanks for your pleasant *nouvelle à la main* of the 23rd. 'Time toils after you in vain', is a quotation you must have heard before. I should have liked to have listened to the Sterne speech and the Brandes lecture. I am sorry

[1] See p. 221.

you have been so unwell, though to be sure, a stern moralist would say you are doing too much. 'You must be careful' —as the judge said to Sam Weller, not foreseeing that I should apply his words to 'the King of Essayists'. Did you see Fitzgerald's letter in yesterday's *Times*? It was, to me, quite pathetic.

We shall probably be released from here next week, not because I am cured; but because it is desirable to give the 'cure' a rest. I am not sorry; though I may have to come again. The place is admirable for idlers with nothing to do but play progressive whist, go char-à-banc excursions, and dress in the evening for vaudeville curtain-raisers or smoking concerts. For any one who wants to work, there is no refuge from the cackle of the card-tables and the crowd of chatterers who seem, as Walpole said, to 'get into one's pockets'. The light is too bad to read after four, and on dark days much earlier. And then the tedium of the meals! I am as tired of brill and boiled mutton as Valoroso was of his wife's eternal blue velvet. On the other hand the bath-men are a new experience. They are most intelligent, cheerful, and well informed. They have generally some useful avocation; and help me to understand the democracy. What they know, they seem to know precisely.

Please give our best regards to 'your ladies'. (I like the phrase: it smacks of Clarissa.)

The next and last letter shows how anxious my father was not to let anything escape into print that was below his earlier standard. It is dated 4 February 1920.

I have just seen the *London Mercury*, for the first time; and seem to recognize in it an always frank and friendly

voice. And now I want your advice on a question of *expediency*. The enclosed verses were written for Mr. Squire, when he asked for something. I afterwards begged to withdraw them. But they came to me in proof, and I amended them. Eventually, I imagine, they were displaced, for the time, by the little octet to you. I suppose he will use them. But what do you think? I don't want to make a mistake, *at my age*. Anything would be better than that, and if you regard them as not up to standard, I would far rather suppress them. But I should like to be backboned by your candid counsel. Do help me!

The poem which forms the subject of the above letter duly appeared in the *London Mercury* under the title 'To a Lyric Poet'. The octet to Sir Edmund Gosse also appeared in the *London Mercury* for February 1920.

XI

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL

PROBABLY few people, outside the circle of students and bibliophils, have any idea of the extent of Austin Dobson's published works. For the last twenty years or more I have made an intensive search for all editions of my father's works, with the result that I have amassed a somewhat unique collection.

The collection, which was during my father's lifetime encouraged and contributed to by him, comprises, in addition to first editions, subsequent editions in each case (including American editions), privately printed items, contributions to magazines, as well as many manuscripts or corrected proof sheets. There are comparatively few volumes missing from the collection, and *most* of these I am still in hopes of obtaining, although, seeing that there were but four copies of *Horace Walpole—A Memoir*, on vellum, and only five on Van Gelder paper, limited to America, it is probable that there must always be one or two gaps.

For the benefit of the curious, it may be stated that the collection described above comprises

over 380 volumes, this figure including certain manuscripts which are in bound form, and no less than fifty bound volumes of magazine articles; but it only includes publications, &c., owing their entire authorship to Austin Dobson, and does not comprise any edited and similar works, which constitute a separate and extensive collection.

The collection, enhanced with some volumes from my father's own bookcase, was exhibited in the rooms of the First Edition Club in May 1925, and at the end of that year the Club published *An Austin Dobson Bibliography*. Sir Edmund Gosse was kind enough to supply a foreword, and this little volume is completed by a quotation of it *in extenso*, as it may be regarded as Sir Edmund's final word on his old friend.

But for those who wish to pursue further and in greater detail the output of Austin Dobson's published work, an Appendix is added containing a numbered list of every volume or separately printed pamphlet owing its sole authorship to him. This list is believed to be complete; moreover it contains two private items, of comparatively small importance, which were not included in the Bibliography published by the First Edition Club, as (I regret to say) their existence was not discovered until after the publication of that volume.

Ah ladye fayre, ah beautye rare,
Ah belle dame sans merci.
In kindlie parte accepte my hearte,
Tho' bigge it is to see.

The birdis love the skies above:
The flouris love the sunne:
The rustlinge trees alle love the breeze:
I prithee love some onne.

As lilye white - as morninge brighte -
And lippēd like redde wine,
In thi hearte, swete, lette kindnesse bete
And bee my Valentine.

AD

A VALENTINE

Written and illustrated by Austin Dobson

The first must rank as the very first separately printed item owing entire authorship to Austin Dobson. It is a privately printed three-verse Valentine composed in 1865. As the original was actually written out in old English script and illustrated by the author, the whole document is here reproduced (see opposite), just as it was originally printed for private circulation. It may be mentioned that in the original drawing there was a freer use of red ink than appears in the print of the poem here reproduced.

The second item was a poem entitled 'A Miltonic Exercise' which was written for the Milton Tercentenary at Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1908, largely at the request of his friend Mr. Harris Rackham, Senior Tutor of the College and brother of Mr. Arthur Rackham the artist. The poem appeared in the *Christ's College Magazine*, vol. xxiii, No. 68, 1908, and was subsequently included in Austin Dobson's *Complete Poetical Works*, but the discovery was not made until recently that its first appearance was upon the menu for a commemorative dinner held at Christ's College, Cambridge, on 10 July, 1908. For the sake of bibliographical exactness, therefore, this is included—as a quasi first edition—in the Appendix to this volume, but both the items

mentioned above are relatively unimportant, although, it may safely be said, practically impossible now to obtain.

ENVOI.

Preface by Sir Edmund Gosse to *An Austin Dobson Bibliography.*

Mr. Alban Dobson has been kind enough to ask me to introduce in a few words this Bibliography prepared from his unrivalled collection of his father's works in prose and verse. It gives me great pleasure to do so, although no introduction can really be necessary in the case of an author who so eminently combines the suffrages of the appreciative Many and the fastidious Few.

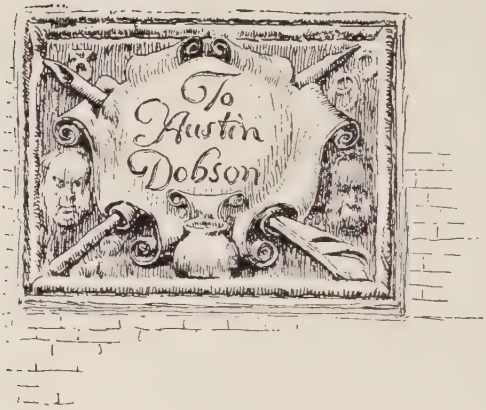
Perhaps the first sentiment of the reader of this Bibliography will be amazement at its abundance. Austin Dobson was so deliberate, so calm in his procedure, that we may well be astonished to find him the author of such a mass of publications. The most exquisite of artists, he was also the most assiduous of revisers, and all he did was accomplished so quietly and so slowly that we might well expect the final output to be scanty. If it was not so, it was because Austin Dobson dedicated all the industry of his long life to the practice of litera-

ture. His ambition was scarcely personal: it was that of the journeyman bee building up the exquisite structure of the hive without haste and without remission. If he ever seemed idle, he was meditating a fresh exertion; if he ever seemed irresolute, he was balancing with infinite care several alternatives of expression.

In writing verse, he spared himself no pains and evaded no difficulty. I do not know among modern poets one who has more defiantly faced all the dangers of an elaborate prosody. His rhymes are rich, and he never shirks them. His metrical adaptations—for he rarely invented a metre—are subjected to the strictest discipline. This may easily be overlooked by a careless reader, because of the serenity of the result, without hitch, without strain. But the facility did not come unbidden, it was the result of a long and severe apprenticeship. All this might have tended to reduce the amount of his work, but the fullness of the present Bibliography shows that this was not the case. The want of rapidity in composition was balanced by the tireless concentration of the artist.

Neither in verse nor in prose is Austin Dobson a revolutionary. He did not consider literature, in the phrase of Mallarmé, 'la langue d'un état de

crise'. His books express a beautiful individuality in terms with which we are outwardly familiar; they do not startle us with experiments which may or may not give ultimate satisfaction. His dependence on those who had preceded him is obvious. It was a feature of his strenuous modesty, his horror of personal emphasis, and it gives his prose, perhaps, a little less value than his verse, which appears to me to be, in its own defined field, supreme and without a rival. In verse he rose above his masters, in prose he walked by their side. How careful he was about minor matters, never neglecting the anise and cummin of book-manufacture, those who visited the First Edition Club's Exhibition of his books will have discovered for themselves. He understood all that went to the illustration and production of the printed page, and he neglected nothing that would add to the modest perfection of a volume. He offers posterity the beautiful example of a very perfect man of letters.



Head-piece to *The Vicar of Wakefield*
By Hugh Thomson

APPENDIX I

List of all the published and privately printed items (the latter being starred) owing their entire authorship to Austin Dobson.

I. A Valentine (illustrated by the Author). 1865.*

II. Statement concerning 'The Drama of the Doctor's Window'. 1872.*

III. Vignettes in Rhyme.
- (1) First Edition. 1873.
- (2) Second Edition. 1874.
- (3) Third Edition. 1875.

IV. Handbook of English Literature.
- (1) First Edition. 1874.
- (2) Second Edition. 1880.
- (3) Revised Edition. 1897.
- (4) Remainder copies (undated).

V. Proverbs in Porcelain.
- (1) First Edition. 1877.[1]
- (2) Second Edition (in two different bindings). 1878.

[1] Mr. F. E. Murray has recently called my attention to a copy of the First Edition in Second Edition covers, which differed from those of the First Edition.

VI. A List of pieces. 1878.*

VII. Hogarth.

(1) First Edition. 1879.
(2) Second Edition. 1883.
(3) Reprint. 1890.
(4) „ (binding altered). 1894.

VIII. A Familiar Epistle (Poem). 1879.*

IX. Vignettes in Rhyme (America).

(1) First Edition (in three different bindings). 1880.
(2) Reprint. 1885.
(3) „ (by another publisher). 1886.

X. Fielding.

(1) First Edition (in three styles). 1883.
(2) American Edition. 1883.
(3) Second Edition (in two styles). 1889.
(4) American Uniform Edition. 1900.
(5) English Reprint. 1902.
(6) „ „ 1903.
(7) Revised Editions (two). 1907.
(8) Pocket Edition. 1909.
(9) Reprint. 1911.
(10) „ 1925.

XI. Henry Fielding (Poem). 1883.*

XII. Old-World Idylls.

(1) First Edition. 1883.
(2) Large paper Edition. 1883.
(3) Second Edition. 1883.
(4) Third Edition. 1883.
(5) Fourth Edition. 1884.
(6) Fifth Edition. 1885.
(7) Sixth Edition. 1886.
(8) Seventh Edition. 1887.
(9) Eighth Edition. 1888.
(10) Ninth Edition. 1889.
(11) Tenth Edition. 1890.
(12) Eleventh Edition. 1893.
(13) Twelfth Edition. 1896.
(14) Thirteenth Edition. 1898.
(15) Fourteenth Edition. 1901.
(16) Fifteenth Edition. 1903.
(17) Sixteenth Edition. 1906.

XIII. Thomas Bewick.

(1) First Edition. 1884.
(2) Large paper Edition. 1884.
(3) American Edition. 1884.
(4) English reprint. 1889.
(5) „ „ 1899.

XIV. At the Sign of the Lyre (America).

(1) First Edition. 1885.
(2) Reprint (by another publisher). 1886.

XV. At the Sign of the Lyre (England).

(1) First Edition. 1885.
(2) Large paper Edition. 1885.
(3) Second Edition. 1886.
(4) Third Edition. 1886.
(5) Fourth Edition. 1886.
(6) Fifth Edition. 1887.
(7) Sixth Edition. 1889.
(8) Seventh Edition. 1890.
(9) Eighth Edition. 1890.
(10) „ „ (another issue). 1894.
(11) Ninth Edition. —
(12) Tenth Edition. 1901.
(13) Eleventh Edition. 1904.

NOTE: The sixth and seventh editions of the above are provided with half-titles and titles for *Poems on Several Occasions*, under which title this volume and the eighth edition of *Old-World Idylls* (1889) were also issued. The two volumes were also issued as:

(14) Poems (two volumes). 1889.
(15) American Edition. 1889.
(16) „ Reprint. 1891.
(17) „ „ 1894.

XVI. Richard Steele.

(1) First Edition. 1886.
(2) Reprint (in two bindings). 1888.

XVII. Oliver Goldsmith.

(1) First Edition (in two bindings). 1888.
(2) Wide margin Edition (in two bindings). 1888.
(3) Later issue of (1). 1888.
(4) Second Edition. 1894.
(5) American Uniform Edition. 1899.
(6) Later issue of (5). 1899.

XVIII. Four Frenchwomen.

(1) First (American) Edition (in two bindings). 1890.
(2) English Edition. 1890.
(3) Large-paper Edition. 1890.
(4) Second Edition. 1891.
(5) „ „ (without portrait). 1891.
(6) Illustrated American Edition (in two bindings). 1891.
(7) American large-paper Edition. 1891.
(8) English reprint. 1893.
(9) American reprint. 1895.
(10) American Uniform Edition. 1899.
(11) English World's Classics Edition (in two bindings). 1922.

NOTE: There was an issue of part of this volume in Braille Type for the blind at an early date.

XIX. The Sundial (Poem).

(1) Ordinary Edition. 1890.
(2) Limited Edition. 1890.

XX. Horace Walpole: A Memoir.

(1) Edition on vellum. 1890.
(2) Edition on Van Gelder paper. 1890.
(3) Edition on Japan paper (American copies). 1890.
(4) Edition on Japan paper (English copies). 1890.
(5) Edition on Dickinson paper (American copies). 1890.
(6) Edition on Dickinson paper (English copies). 1890.
(7) Second (English) Edition. 1893.
(8) Second (English) Edition (different publisher). 1893.
(9) Second (English) Edition (limited issue). 1893.
(10) Second (American) Edition. 1893.
(11) Second (American) Edition (limited issue). 1893.
(12) American Uniform Edition. 1900.
(13) Revised (English) Edition. 1910.
(14) New Edition (revised by Dr. Paget Toynbee). 1927.

(15) New Edition (limited issue on handmade paper). 1927.

XXI. William Hogarth.

(1) First Edition. 1891.
(2) Large paper Edition. 1891.
(3) Second Edition. 1893.
(4) Enlarged Edition. 1898.
(5) „ „ (Two trial copies) 1897.
(6) Large quarto Edition. 1902.
(7) „ „ „ (Translated into French).
(8) Cheap Edition (in three bindings). 1907.
(9) American issue. 1907.

XXII. Selected Poems (Leipzig Edition). 1892.

XXIII. Alfred, Lord Tennyson (Poem). 1892.*

XXIV. Eighteenth Century Vignettes (First series).

(1) First (American) Edition. 1892.
(2) Advance copies (England). 1892.
(3) First (English) Edition. 1892.
(4) Limited (American) Edition. 1892.
(5) Limited (English) Edition. 1892.
(6) American reprint. 1893.
(7) Second (English) Edition. 1893.

(8) American Uniform Edition. 1899.
(9) Pocket (English) Edition (in two bindings). 1905.
(10) Cheap (English) Edition. (Nelson.) 1912.
(11) Reprint. World's Classics Edition (in two bindings). 1923.

XXV. The Ballad of Beau Brocade.

(1) First Edition, first issue (in two bindings). 1892.
(2) Limited Edition (different binding for America). 1892.
(3) First Edition, second issue (in two bindings). 1892.
(4) First Edition, third issue (in two bindings). 1892.
(5) American Edition. 1892.
(6) Second (English) Edition (in two bindings). 1892.
(7) Third (English) Edition (in two bindings). 1892.
(8) Pocket (English) Edition (in two bindings). 1903.
(9) Limited hand-coloured issue of (8). 1903.

XXVI. Proverbs in Porcelain. Illustrated edition.

(1) First Edition (in three bindings). 1893.

(2) Large paper Edition (different binding for America). 1893.
(3) American Edition (in two bindings). 1893.
(4) Pocket (English) Edition (in three bindings). 1905.

XXVII. Eighteenth Century Vignettes (Second series).

(1) First Edition. 1894.
(2) Large paper Edition. 1894.
(3) American Edition (in two bindings). 1894.
(4) American limited Edition. 1894.
(5) American Uniform Edition. 1899.
(6) Pocket (English) Edition (in two bindings). 1907.
(7) Reprint. World's Classics Edition (in two bindings). 1923.

XXVIII. The Story of Rosina.

(1) First Edition (in two bindings). 1895.
(2) Later copies. 1895.
(3) Large paper Edition. 1895.
(4) American Edition. 1895.

XXIX. Poems on Several Occasions.

(1) American Edition (fifty copies). 1895.

(2) Another American Edition (fifty copies). 1895.
(3) Edition of two hundred copies (American copies). 1895.
(4) Edition of two hundred copies (English copies). 1895.
(5) Edition of seven hundred and fifty copies (American copies). 1895.
(6) Edition of seven hundred and fifty copies (English copies). 1895.
(7) American Uniform Edition. 1899.

XXX. Eighteenth Century Vignettes (Third Series).
(1) First (English) Edition. 1896.
(2) Later copies (without gilt top). 1896.
(3) American Edition (in two bindings). 1896.
(4) American Uniform Edition. 1899.
(5) Pocket (English) Edition (in two bindings). 1907.
(6) Reprint. World's Classics Edition (in two bindings). 1923.

XXXI. Postscript to Retaliation (Poem).*
(1) Limited Edition. 1896.
(2) Slightly different copies on larger paper. 1896.

XXXII. Verses read at the Omar Khayyám Club.*

(1) Limited Edition. 1897.
(2) Copies on vellum. 1897.

XXXIII. A Ballad of the Queen's Majesty (Poem). 1897.*

XXXIV. Collected Poems.

(1) First Edition. 1897.
(2) Second Edition. 1897.
(3) Third Edition. 1898.
(4) Fourth Edition. 1899.
(5) Fifth Edition. 1902.
(6) Sixth Edition. 1903.
(7) Seventh Edition. 1907.
(8) Eighth Edition. 1909.
(9) Ninth Edition. 1913.
(10) Ninth Edition (second impression). 1914.
(11) Ninth Edition (third impression). 1920.
(12) Re-issue by the Oxford University Press. 1923.

XXXV. Miscellanies (First Series). 1898.

XXXVI. A Whitehall Eclogue (Poem). 1899.*

XXXVII. A Departmental Ditty (Poem). 1899.*

XXXVIII. A Paladin of Philanthropy, and other Papers.

(1) First Edition. 1899.[1]
(2) „ „ (later copies, without advertisements). 1899.
(3) Re-issue by the Oxford University Press. 1923.
(4) Reprint. World's Classics Edition (in two bindings). 1925.

XXXIX. Verses written for the Omar Khayyám Club. 1901.*

XL. Miscellanies (Second series).

(1) First Edition. 1901.
(2) Reprint. 1902.

XLI. Carmina Votiva. 1901.*

XLII. Side-Walk Studies.

(1) First Edition. 1902.
(2) Second Edition. 1903.
(3) Re-issue by the Oxford University Press. 1923.
(4) Reprint. World's Classics Edition (in two bindings). 1924.
(5) Edition in Braille type for the Blind. 1926.

XLIII. Samuel Richardson. 1902.

[1] See note at end of p. 280.

XLIV. To William John Courthope (Poem). 1903.*

XLV. Verses for the Omar Khayyám Club. 1903.*

XLVI. Fanny Burney.
(1) First Edition. 1903.
(2) Reprint. 1904.

XLVII. Poems (selected).
(1) First Edition. 1905.
(2) Reprint. 1909.
(3) Re-issue. World's Classics Edition (in two bindings). 1923.
(4) Revised edition. World's Classics Edition (in two bindings). 1924.

XLVIII. An Epistle to the Editor (Poem). 1906.*

XLIX. Introduction to John Evelyn's Diary. 1906.*

L. A Miltonic Exercise (Poem). On Dinner Menu. 1908.*

LI. De Libris. Prose and Verse.
(1) First Edition. 1908.
(2) American Edition. 1908.
(3) Second (English) Edition. 1909.
(4) Re-issue by the Oxford University Press. 1923.

LII. Proverbs in Porcelain. (Pirated American Edition).

(1) Edition on handmade paper. 1909.
(2) Copies on Japanese vellum. 1909.

LIII. Letter to Arthur Waugh. 1910.*

LIV. Verses for the Omar Khayyám Club. 1910.*

LV. Old Kensington Palace, and other Papers.

(1) First Edition. 1910.
(2) Later copies. 1910.
(3) Re-issue by the Oxford University Press. 1923.
(4) Reprint. World's Classics Edition (in two bindings). 1926.

LVI. To the King's Most Excellent Majesty (Poem). 1911.*

(1) Trial copies (fourteen). 1911.
(2) Final copies (twenty-five). 1911.
(3) Copies on vellum (three). 1911.
(4) Copies on vellum (two), with the words 'An Horatian Ode' omitted from title. 1911.

LVII. William Makepeace Thackeray (Poem). 1911.*

LVIII. At Prior Park, and other Papers.

(1) First Edition. 1912.
(2) Re-issue by the Oxford University Press. 1923.
(3) Reprint. World's Classics Edition (in two bindings). 1925.

LIX. A New Dialogue of the Dead. 1912.*

LX. Eighteenth Century Studies (Selected Essays). 1912.

LXI. For a Blank Page (Poem). 1913.*

LXII. Poems on the War. 1915.*

LXIII. Rosalba's Journal, and other Papers.

(1) First Edition. 1915.
(2) Re-issue by the Oxford University Press. 1923.
(3) Reprint. World's Classics Edition (in two bindings). 1926.

LXIV. Fielding and Andrew Miller. 1916.*

LXV. A Bookman's Budget.

(1) First Edition. 1917.
(2) Second impression. 1917.

LXVI. Later Essays. 1921.

LXVII. An Austin Dobson Anthology.

(1) First Edition.—1922.
(2) American Edition. 1922.
(3) Re-issue by the Oxford University Press. 1924.

LXVIII. An Austin Dobson Calendar.

(1) First Edition (for 1924). 1923.
(2) Second Edition (for 1925). 1924.

LXIX. Complete Poetical Works.

(1) First Edition (Oxford Poets Series). 1923.
(2) First Edition (India paper). 1923.
(3) First Edition (Oxford Standard Authors). 1923.
(4) American Edition. 1923.
(5) Special (Editor's) Edition of thirteen copies (in two bindings). 1923.

LXX. Selected Poems (Augustan Poets Series). 1926.

Note.—A copy of *A Paladin of Philanthropy* (see p. 276), purporting to be the first copy received from the Printers, and containing a plan different from that appearing in the normal edition, as well as an inscription in verse, in MS., was bought by Dr. Margaret Dobson at the Gosse sale at Sotheby's in July, 1928.

APPENDIX II

BOB TREVOR AND I.

By Austin Dobson.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.—THE LAST NIGHT BUT ONE.

There is a common saying, rather a popular one it is too, and, like many of the kind, quite as false as it is true, that our schooldays are the happiest days of our lives. It depends on circumstances. For some, those days were fraught with tyranny and trouble, filled to the brim with griefs as poignant in degree, and, whatever Mr. Philosopher may say to the contrary, as fully equal to our capacity for bearing them, as any of those which later fall to the lot of man. To others, the recollection of them brings back nothing but the remembrance of many pleasures and few pains—nothing, in fact, much worse than the inexorable bell that rang 'so early in the morning', and, greater grievance still, on winter mornings, too. I range myself with these. For me the old days have not yet grown remote. I have never liked the city life or cared to suit it, and I confess to looking back very often with mingled pleasure and regret to the bygone time of bat and ball, of careless days and dreamless nights.

For example, when you wake up here, on some dull morning, say, muddled and puzzle-headed, knowing

perfectly, although the blind is down, that a thick, yellow fog is clinging like an unwholesome presence to the sodden earth, that if the blinds were up, all that you could possibly see would be some five feet square of gritty earth, with a dusty evergreen in the middle, and a plentiful crop of bits of paper all round—is it a wonder, I say, that your thoughts go wandering back to the old famous games of 'touch-and-go' among the lean trunks of the fir trees upon the Castle Road; to the cricket field on the windy common—our side in—the ball skimming along like a swallow, Tom Merryweather making one of his wonderful single-handed catches, and the ginger beer man coming up in the background; to endless 'bobby-hunts' and runs of 'fox-and-hounds'; to long half-holidays of boating, bird-nesting, and fishing in sight of the dear old towers of Warwick Castle.

Or, perhaps, 'twill be the sleepy Welsh watering place, with the hockey on the green, and the town boys coming down in a body to drive us off, or the cruises in the writing master's little yacht, firing off salutes at sea out of a small brass gun in the bows, or bathing among the big boulders far along the coast, or fishing on the pitchy, sticky pier for fish that had to be curled into the saucepan, they were so big, or rather the saucepan was so small. Every one cooked at that school. I don't know whether we could boil a potato—why, few cooks can do that!—but we fried them capitally. And I remember one Saturday night in particular, when there

was no regulated fagging, and willing people had to work hard, that the first cock (first cook he was too) met me so laden with eatables for the different kitchens that he said it was a shame, and instituted eight regular fags in consequence, for which I was very grateful.

Or, perhaps, you don't go farther back than your last French school—(my last French school, I mean)—in the old Alsatian city, with its great cathedral with the spiral stairs and lace-like tracery; its peppery professors; its pilgrimages to the Black Forest, some twenty or thirty at a time, to sleep in great lofts on heaps of hay, to rest at little inns, with maize all round the eaves and musical clocks in the kitchen—in fact, with its host of pleasant recollections, which are very dear to me, but which would be far too dear for you if this volume were composed of them.

Out of them all, nevertheless, (and one public and two private schools should furnish something) I have picked an adventure, which we, that is Bob and I, thought very strange and 'equal to a book'.

But first I should tell you how I and Bob Trevor became the friends we are—are, I say, for I heard from him only the other day. It must have been about two halves before the above-mentioned occurrence that Bob came to the Elms. He was a fine, big young fellow, very quiet, and looked almost stupid. His mother had very lately died, and his guardian had decided that a private tutor was too expensive, and so had sent him to us. He was little liked at first. The smaller boys

found that he would not play with them, the big boys that he hadn't over-much money, two reasons which left him rather solitary. Added to these there was a look of determination about him—a kind of William Tell expression, as it were—which, combined with our ignorance of his powers, served to keep him unmolested.

Well, one half, some ten of us younger boys, the whole top dormitory, in fact, were banded together to resist the oppression of a most notorious bully, one Doll Davis by name. He was about seventeen or eighteen, and the son of a gentleman farmer in the neighbourhood. His companions had mostly been stable lads and farm labourers, who had not lessened his natural taste for coarseness and brutality. His most prominent feature was an enormous nose, which was fair, or rather unfair, game for all of us. When we found it to be his weakness, depend upon it, the grass did not grow under our feet. We called out, 'Nosey, Nosey,' whenever we saw him; we sang glees and catches about it, always, be it understood, suffering shrewdly from his terrible dog-whip in consequence. I remember that once we drew a great cartoon of Venus and Adonis, which we pasted up in the play-ground, the part of Adonis by Mr. Davis (nose much exaggerated and finely coloured), and that of Venus by a Jewess at the pastry cook's shop in town, who was also remarkable for a magnificent organ. Underneath this picture we put some verses (Greene's, as I have since discovered), which Punkey Watson found in an

old book in the doctor's room, and which had a French refrain, and ran as follows:

See how sad thy Venus lies,
N'OSE*rez-vous, mon bel ami,*
Love in heart, and tears in eyes;
Je vous en prie, pity me,
N'OSE*rez-vous, mon bel, mon bel,*
N'OSE*rez vous, mon bel ami?*

A poor joke, and an ungenerous one. In those days we had not learned to spare a personal defect, nor had we learned that

Mockery is the fume of little hearts.

Boys are merciless, and Doll was a dreadful bully.

You can imagine that he was furious. The serpent-like lash of the dog whip stung terribly that day. But, after that, he scarcely ever appeared in the playground without being greeted by the terrible refrain. Even the poor little Crab, who had a positive hatred of his French irregular verbs, would sing it out behind the tyrant's back.

Of course he tore up the drawing, and of course it was not the last. Those of us who could draw a little, and I was one of the number, were always contriving trick drawings, sketches which seemed landscapes, etc., but which always contained somewhere the contour of a formidable nose. One day as I was putting the finishing strokes to one of these, a waterfall coming tumbling through huge stones, whose outlines more or less resembled noses, it was suddenly snatched out of my

hand. I looked up, startled, and saw Doll. He did not say anything, but went away and carefully studied the sketch. Presently he came back, and I knew that my hour was come. All the band were in the Bull Field, playing at hockey. He dragged me into the playroom, which was used for wet days, and began lashing my legs most unmercifully with the dog whip. I bore it as long as I could—I think I should have fainted at last, when suddenly the door tumbled open and Bob looked in, in his quiet way. He must have seen something in my face, for the next moment he fell upon Doll like a fury, beat him soundly, and finally knocked him, whimpering, stupefied (for Bob was the smaller boy), and well thrashed, into a hamper of young starlings. Then he walked quietly away, burnt the dog-whip, bit by bit, at the schoolroom fire, and afterwards came back to me.

'I tell you what it is, Traff, if any of you fellows want to give that blackguard toco, just come to me, and I'll skin the rabbit for you.'

I don't know the derivation of 'toco', indeed I am not sure that I have spelled it properly, but I have a distinct impression that it was generally very painful. So, when the band came home, and my legs were exhibited, Master Doll was marched off to the playroom. The 'rabbit was skinned' (i.e. his jacket was plucked over his head to stifle his cries), and he was solemnly cobbed by all the exasperated members of the confederacy with knotted cords. After that Doll seemed

to recognize that we had a dangerous ally in Bob, and ceased to molest us. Bob, on the other hand, would never allow us to irritate Doll, and made us give up our abusive chorus. From that time to this we two have been the fastest of friends.

Trevor was, in reality, an 'awful brick'. Not clever by any means from a schoolroom point of view, and certainly without that ability which lies on the surface, but nevertheless clever. He made no head whatever in classics, and mostly cribbed his Virgil from me; but in a slow, sure way he was great at mathematics. Out of school he had delightful talents. With that big knife of his—a very tool chest it was too—he could make almost anything. His specialty, I remember, was a wooden spoon, very useful in our cooking operations. I have by me now a horse-pistol barrel which he fitted to a deal stock, like a small gun, and with which we performed certain exploits which would nowadays sound very much like poaching. He made the most wonderful show of our garden—we had a windmill, a flagstaff, a watermill, and a fountain, which last, like Mr. Wemmick's, in *Great Expectations*, played to that extent that it would quite wet the back of your hand. We had a reservoir—fish pond is the truer term—in which there was one stone-loach, and very tenacious of life he was too, for he actually lingered through two halves in spite of a kind of leprosy by which he lost most of his scales. In fine, however bad Bob's quantities may have been, his qualities were first rate; he was very generous, brave,

and not at all fool-hardy, but simply and absolutely fearless. And, I repeat it, we were excellent friends.

It was the last night but one of the last half. The 'last half' because Doctor Rooke was going to the grammar school at Oswestry, and only a few of his present pupils were to follow him. Bob and I were leaving for good. Bob had a nomination for a naval cadetship (he had been studying *Peter Simple* all the half in consequence), and I was going to a school in France.

It was very hot that May. At least I know that out of the schoolroom window the trees looked asleep, so quiet were they, only vibrating now and then when a bird hopped up and down inside, and made a fellow enraged at being pent up in a square oven all day. (It never struck us though that it must be just as bad for those poor starlings who lived in hampers in the play-room.) It was nearing five o'clock; I had just finished my 'Arnold', Bob was adding a gibbet to a collection of carvings inside the lid of his desk, Punkey Watson was arranging his silk-worm trays, the Crab was secretly making a horsehair chain, and 'Doctor Johnson' was lumped over his desk, devouring the *Bride of Bohemia*. I remember him quite well; both his shoes had fallen off, his collar he had taken off for ease, his legs were tightly curled round the iron of the form, and every now and then he would shiver all over with a kind of suppressed rapture as he came to a striking passage. Poor Drummond! only the other day he was shot

accidentally, just after he had taken high honours at Cambridge!

Bob's place was at one end of the first long desk, and mine was at the other, near the window. This was very convenient you know, for when I saw a bird fluttering in the trap under the shrubs on the little embankment that separated the playground from the front of the house, I could sing out to Old Clarke (the usher), 'Please sir, may I wash my hands,' sneak round under the wall, and have him hard and fast in the wash-house before he knew where he was.

Bob had finished his gibbet, and taken out a little tube of elder-wood, which he used for messages. I took out mine, for he had made me a corresponding one, and we began firing knobs of paper at the 'Doctor'. But it was not easy to disturb him. Like Sancho's donkey, he only shook his ears, and otherwise ignored us altogether, and so we finally left off. Then Bob blew over to me a little roll of paper on which he had written 'Chivy; pass on'. Then we shot messages to the 'Doctor', Punkey, Crab, and the rest (Crab's was 'Chivy; *cave*'), and then everybody nodded, which was equivalent to an arrangement that we should all join in a 'chivy' after school, and that the Crab should keep *cave* for us.

I think that almost the only good that Drill-master Saul Clifton, ex-sergeant of Scots Greys—(what a wonderful canary that man had!)—did to us, was to give perfection to our chivies. They were matters of high art. Perhaps you don't have them at your school;

I fancy a good many of the old customs have gone out. Indeed, I read the other day in a fat blue-book that the boys at one of our great public institutions don't *fight* when they fall out, but *call each other names*. I confess I think the old way was the best. But this has nothing to do with chivies. This was the manner of a chivy. We were confined by the rules within certain bounds, and on no account were allowed to go into the town without special permission. The beauty of a chivy consisted in racing all over the forbidden ground, some twenty at a time, in Indian file, and taking any fun that came in the way. An additional flavour was imparted to these excursions from the fact that, at any time, we might come suddenly upon the Doctor and Mrs. Rooke walking calmly round the corner of the street.

Well, on this occasion (of course they were rare, these pleasures), we sallied out, over the big gate behind the coach-house, leaving the Crab perched on a barrel to give us warning, and pounded off at the double, with Bob at our head.

I can see the whole band as I write, first clattering down the sunny High-street, then charging the 'Little Woman's', and carrying off everything down to the fly-blown cheesecake that had been in the window for a fortnight—(boys are not particular, and 'twas purchased at a reduction)—then swooping down on a cad and bearing off his cap, then slow march past the Castle porter's lodge in order to cheek our enemy at our ease; then rushing at Miss Withering's, in Mount Pleasant,

to get the last volume of the B. of B. for the old 'Doctor' (the old 'Doctor' marking time heavily all the while outside, his stockings flapping on his Bluchers, and the peak of his cap over his left ear, while Punkey Watson is trying hard to catch a silkworm on his necktie without losing a step), then quick march round the market, singing 'Brian O'Lynn' (a performance which was supposed to be very aggravating to the little tailor at the corner), then 'Halt' to deposit on the top of the old broken cross in the centre of the said market some thirteen or fourteen caps which we had picked up on the route, and lastly back at the double with a vengeance, for there is a whole army of the town in chase.

We got home without much fighting this time. There were several sharp single-handed engagements in the rear, but mostly our system of stopping suddenly to Bob's 'Halt', and tripping up the foremost pursuers proved quite sufficient, at least we had no wounded when we swept in at the back gate.

No Crab! Presently he poked up his head, and cried in a hoarse whisper, '*Cave*, *cave*; old Philpot's in the coach-house,' and then suddenly disappeared as if he had been plucked backwards. We deliberated for a moment, and then decided to try and sneak in at the front gate, as if nothing had happened. But, lo and behold, we found Doctor Rooke walking towards us, with one hand under his coat-tail, and the other holding the Crab by the sleeve of his jacket.

The Doctor looked very grave. We, being taken in

the act, could say nothing. At last his face relaxed a little.

'I'm ashamed of you, boys,' he said, 'you, too, Trevor, who ought to set a better example.' Then his face relaxed a little more.

'Please, sir, we wanted change of air,' said a shrill, impudent, Irish voice from the end of the line.

'Yes, sir, we were in low spirits,' followed another. In fact, all discipline was loosed in the last week, and we knew it.

'Oh!' said the Doctor, 'indeed; then bed's the place; I should recommend bed as a very successful remedy. Go up to bed, all of you, and mind, if we hear of any more of these frolics, there will be no breaking-up supper to-morrow. You, too,' he added, releasing the Crab, 'you're as bad as the rest.'

'Please, sir, Crab wasn't doing anything, Crab was only crying *Cave* for us.'

'Oh! indeed—only crying *Cave* for you, was he? Very well, now he shall cry *Peccavi* for me,' says the Doctor, mightily pleased with his own joke.

So off we went, with Old Clarke at our head to see us properly tucked up, for there was a tradition that boys who were sent to bed, sometimes preferred staying up. Then we heard the Doctor's deep voice come up the stairs, saying in an injured tone, 'If you had been gentlemen, any of you, you would have had the decency to say "Good-night". I shall take the other boys out for a walk.'

Of course, we cried out, 'Good-night' unanimously. But the good Doctor was not wise in his generation. In reality, 'twas those 'other boys' he punished. When we saw them, presently, filing out, two and two, in a kind of funeral procession, looking quite genteel, with their gloves on, to walk so many miles along the dry, unshaded Castle-road and so many miles back, we thought ourselves very lucky to have escaped from that gratuitous pleasure. Besides, we had received a communication from the Crab, by which we knew that we should not long be troubled with Mr. Clarke's company. There was a bouquet on the wall! Now, the said bouquet was the well-known signal—(who has a secret in a school?)—of a young lady, the daughter of a large florist up the road, that she was at liberty to receive the visit of Old Clarke, if Old C. was so inclined. And, as far as my recollection serves (they are married now), Old Clarke was never disinclined, but quite the reverse. We boys knew that we might do anything when there was a bouquet on the wall.

On the present occasion, therefore, he only exacted from us a promise that we *would* go to bed, and not make much row, and the next moment we saw him bolting, bareheaded, out of the playground, delicately packing away the precious bouquet in the crown of his hat. Things were evidently coming to the crisis. Poor old Clarke! We used to laugh at him because he had no teeth, and, when he had his bread and milk at breakfast, the milk would come trickling out at the sides of

his mouth; but I don't believe there is anywhere a stauncher, honester, and more unselfish creature than that homely, though not ill-favoured Scotch usher, in his rusty, snuff-coloured coat.

We took advantage of him, we played tricks on him, but when we promised him anything we kept our faith. We did now; at least we only told off two of our wiliest, the one to fetch the Crab's pipe out of his desk, and the other as ambassador extraordinary to the cook, with full powers to hold out promises of considerable gratifications, to be faithfully paid—next half—if she would send us up some bread and beer, for going to bed meant fasting. Both missions were successful. That kind Grace (who had been Mrs. Rooke's maid before she married, and who would nurse a fellow and read 'Ben Brace' to him when he was sick), actually brought us up a quart bottle of the Doctor's particular bitter (and prime it tasted, I can tell you, passed round in a clean soap dish, to the tune of

> Happy and glorious,
> Two half-pints among four of us,
> God save the Queen,

which was at once improvised), together with a great apronful of bread and cheese. And when everybody had hugged Grace to his heart's content, and promised to lavish the wealth of the Indies on her—next half—she went down, and there was a general call upon the Crab to give us a concert.

The said Crab was a very important personage

among us. He was a little crook-backed fellow, with hair so light that you might have taken him for an Albino, had it not been for his large blue eyes, which were somewhat prominent. This last peculiarity, added to a curious side-long walk, had procured him his name, which, as he never seemed to object to it, he never lost. He was a distant relation, and rather a favourite of the Doctor, who made great show of punishing him whenever, as at present, the punishment was light. The Crab had never learned music, but he had bought one of those large threepenny tin pipes, on which he had taught himself to play. As soon as we found out his talent, Crab's pipe, especially at night, was never out of his mouth. I don't think he knew any tune quite through—in fact his instrument was not equal to the work, but he had a strange knack of weaving scraps together, and producing a continuous music, which we thought very wonderful indeed.

It was very quaint to see him, perched on his pillow, like Hop-o'-my-Thumb in Cruikshank's picture, his little crooked figure looking stranger still through the thin night-dress, his great blue eyes a-light over his swollen cheeks, and all the fellows grouped about him, wrapped in their blankets, as solemn as Sagamores, for we always had to come pretty close in these entertainments, as he generally wound up with what we used to call his 'whisper-tunes'.

These had been contrived for secrecy, and were the only ones played in the bed-room, except on occasions

like the present, when there was no fear. They were his own, and looking back now, I am still inclined to think them very beautiful. He had been bred by the sea, and into those tunes of his would weave the restless washing of the waves, the whirling to and fro of a lost wind, or the far-off wailing of sea-fowl. Or he would link them all together, and so steal into a strange, sad kind of no tune, which seemed to go tremulously feeling round and round the room, holding us all entranced, and yet so low, so low that we had to keep quite close to him to hear it.

I only judge by the effect upon us. Doctor Johnson would sit shivering with delight, Punkey Watson used to lie with his mouth open in a kind of blank beatitude (until, perhaps, he would be disturbed somewhere by a silkworm, numbers of which were always crawling about him), and Bob privately confessed to me that he always felt inclined to 'blub' over those whisper-tunes. I suppose you think that that wasn't particularly manly, but if Bob said it, it was true, which was rather better.

Our concert lasted till the rest came up to bed; only one of them belonged to our room, a sneaking sort of fellow whom we didn't much like. The Doctor, strange to say, had taken the boys on the pier, and, good easy man as he was, had dropped both his black gloves into the sea, and they had gone floating away to his great dismay; and while he was looking after them wistfully, some of his regiment had actually left him

and gone to the 'Little Woman's' and back, which had almost elevated their walk into a 'lark'.

Murphy, that was the name of our fellow, gave us to understand that we might expect a descent upon us from the upper dormitory. So we set chairs between the beds' legs, after the manner of *chevaux-de-frise*, flanked them with basins and soap dishes full of water, tied cunning strings to trip the enemy up, and waited patiently for a full hour with shouldered bolsters. But the enemy didn't come—and when we sent out scouts we found that the enemy was feasting quietly in its dormitory, with the doors locked. Evidently master Murphy had been suborned to report falsely, in order that we might leave them at leisure to enjoy themselves. And I promise you he was properly bolstered and tossed in a blanket when we found him out. There was no quarter for treachery with us.

I forget the precise nature of our amusements after that, but I know that when Old Clarke entered, as he did presently, we were recovering from a tremendous crash. We had been having a rat-hunt—two boys being ferrets and a third the rat; this last always a supple, snaky sort of boy, who was chased up and down among the beds and wash-hand stands. Our principal wash-hand stand was a very long one, which held some half-dozen basins, and under this the cornered rat had taken refuge, and, the ferrets pulling at him, the result was that the whole apparatus came down with a fearful clamour, just as Old Clarke entered the room, which

he had no sooner done than he tripped over one of the strings. Of course, some of us rushed forward to save him, and to assert noisily that the trap had not been set for him; but, to our astonishment, instead of distributing showers of lines according to custom, he said good-naturedly that it was no consequence, and, more curious still, that he should send up the housemaid to set matters right, and that he shouldn't say anything about it. In fact, Old Clarke was in the most extraordinary good humour. 'Twas the bouquet on the wall! Looking back, now, with shrewder perceptions, and the aid of dates, I find that he must have successfully declared himself that very night, which would account for more things than one.

'I was coming up to tell you,' said he, 'that the Doctor has decided, in consequence of the general upset—but it's quite against his judgment, he particularly wishes me to say—to give you a whole holiday to-morrow.'

'Hurrah for the Doctor, hurrah for Old—— for Mr. Clarke,' sang out all voices.

'Yes; and he wished me particularly to say, that as some of you had change of air to-day, he assumed those boys wouldn't care for a holiday, and so he has made arrangements for them to stay at home in the schoolroom.'

'Hurrah!' croaked out the battered Murphy; and the 'Doctor' privily threw a boot at him. 'Oh, yes! Don't he wish he may get it? Walker! That's not true, is it, Mr. Clarke?' cried the rest.

But Old Clarke shut the door without a word, and so we didn't believe him.

Bob bent over to me. Our beds were close together.

'I say, Traff, now's the time! Rockleigh wood; eh! old fellow?'

'All right,' whispered I. 'Mum as a mouse, you know!'

'Trust me for that. But what a lark! Wake me if you wake first. Good-night, mate,' and Bob prepared for sleep.

But before we were well off, there came another visitor. This was M. Biscornet, commonly called 'Mosshur'. He was a small, brown, choleric man of very uncertain age, with a habit of clawing at you, when you displeased him; a first-rate master, and wonderfully skilled in all athletic exercises. His peculiarities were that he generally had a cold, real or feigned, and that he did not look scrupulously clean. There was a tradition that when he came ('twas in winter), the first thing he said, upon awaking in the dormitory where he had been placed for the night, was: 'Boyce! Ees it cōld, ze morning?' Being told that it was, he said quietly, 'Den, I veel not vaash'; and turned round to sleep five minutes longer. But tradition or no, he was a capital fellow and a great favourite.

He had long been threatening to return to France: he was growing older, and the colds troubled him more. '*Voyez-vous*,' we heard him once say to Old Clarke, 'Your *température* is so cōld! I frees myself! Your

ladiss are so cōld. I catch a coff. I am nevare wizzout my po-kette 'andkaresheef. I shall go baak to Frānce. I shall find me some Annette or Pauline. I shall go baak.' He was going now. The change in the school offered him the opportunity. And the last thing that I remember on this, the last night but one of the last half, is the figure of the poor Frenchman, with his double-breasted plaid waistcoat, and his frock coat with the very tight sleeves, sitting upon a bed, shaking as many hands as he could at once, and murmuring, as the tears rolled down his bronzed, whiskerless, Gascon face, '*Ils sont bien aimables ces enfants, bien aimables!*'

PART II.—THE LAST NIGHT OF ALL.

The expedition to Rockleigh Wood, mentioned in the last chapter, had been a long planned and long expected one. We had a grand collection of birds' eggs, Bob and I, but as yet we had never explored Rockleigh Wood, the resources of which were reputed to be immense, and which, from very ignorance, we had been accustomed to regard as a wondrous kind of enchanted forest, where we might actually find a hawk's nest, and where golden-crested wren's eggs were to be had for the asking—taking I mean. It was quite out of bounds, and beside any punishment which the Doctor might visit on us, we ran a fair chance of being soundly thrashed by the keepers, if we were caught; and yet I believe that neither of us slept very soundly

that night, or, sleeping, dreamed but of to-morrow's expedition.

The owner of Rockleigh Hall and wood was a so-called Captain Rockleigh, not that he had any right to the prefix, as he had never served in any capacity, but it had been given to him by the country people in default of a better title, and, perhaps, as being popularly consistent with his naturally stern character. He was not much liked by the country gentry, and lived the life of a solitary in the old, damp, ivy-grown hall, where Rockleigh after Rockleigh had vegetated from time immemorial. He was married, they said, but no one ever saw Mrs. Rockleigh, who was reported to be a faint, pale, half-effaced sort of woman, with washed-out blue eyes. There were those who declared that she was not over wise—that stood to reason, or she would never have married her husband,—but the good-natured people who hinted this intended to imply that she was, or had been, most decidedly cracked. The pair had one son, Oliver, who had been a bone of contention, if the conflict between a very weak woman and a very obstinate man can be termed contention, ever since his birth. The father insisted that the boy should be like all the passed away Rockleighs, skilled in the stable and the field, but refused to have him taught anything else. The mother, submissive on every other point, could not bear to see her son grow up a fool, and secretly educated him whenever she could. Oliver, growing older, and not at all unwilling, espoused his

mother's views. Henceforth there was no quiet in Rockleigh Hall. The high-spirited lad left his home two or three times, always to be recalled in a temporary calm, for the squire, angry as he was, could not afford to forget that his son was the last of the Rockleighs. Finally, there had been a terrible rupture, and, as report had it, Mr. Oliver Rockleigh was at that time living in France upon a very small allowance.

Of course we boys knew nothing of this, which was knowledge acquired long after our 'last night' was over and gone; but what we did know was, that the squire had one of his fits of rheumatic gout, which certainly would not improve his temper if he caught us, but which made it very unlikely that we should meet him strolling about the preserves, as he was used to do.

So, directly we saw that Grace was beginning to cut the bread and cheese for the fellows to take with them, we induced her to look another way, under pretence of an elderly gentleman standing on his head outside, made a descent upon the plate, and were out of the playground and skimming along the road towards Rockleigh Wood nearly an hour before any of the rest.

It was a beautiful day. But it's very little use describing the day or its beauties, especially as we didn't notice either very much. A fellow can't distinguish landscape when he's doubling along against time. I remember that there had been a thunderstorm that morning, that the trees were glistening with rain, that the sky seemed made of silver and of pearl, and that the

larks were singing beautifully above the young green shoots of corn; but if you can gather any idea of the excessive 'jollyness' of that day to us—a whole holiday, and do what you like—it is more than I expect. I remember, too, that we made one halt to wade in the pools on the sandy old Point, and that we climbed up to the cross-trees of the stranded schooner (it had been there for sale all my time), in order to hang out our legs to dry, but after that we did not stop at all until we came to Rockleigh Wood.

Neither do I propose describing the wood itself. Suffice it to say, that by the time we had filled our box with eggs (we had taken but one golden-crested wren's nest) it was nearly five o'clock, and we had lost our way.

Lost our way, most completely. A turn to the right and a turn to the left, according to receipt, served only to bewilder us more, and a third attempt brought us to the walls of a tumble-down structure, half *belle-vue*, half lodge, which stood in a little cleared space, and by the side of which, deep in a hole between three great stones, and almost hidden by underwood, gleamed the clear water of a shallow well.

'Bags I first drink,' says Bob, according to the polite practice of schoolboys, and was down on his face in a moment.

I stood looking up at the ivy-covered walls of the lodge.

'Bob,' said I, as he rose again, with dripping lips, 'there's a nest in that corner; I saw a bird go out—

starling, I think. Just run up while I drink, that 's a good fellow!'

A great white owl slid noiselessly through the trees at a little distance. 'Oh! Bob, if we could only get an owl's egg.' This fired Bob, who began climbing slowly up the side of the wall, and I lay down to drink, noticing as I stooped that the words '**Grata Sume**' were cut deeply on the stone in front of me. Oh, the delight of that dip. I was trying to keep my head under water as long as possible, when I thought I heard Bob calling.

'Traff, did you hear that noise?' says Bob, half way up the wall.

'What noise? How could I with my ears full of water?'

'Well, listen! perhaps it will come again.'

It did. A low, monotonous humming, something like the far-off cooing of ringdoves, but sounding somewhat like a human voice.

'Oh, it 's only a wood-pigeon with a cold,' said I, laughing.

'Nonsense, it 's here—inside here,' said Bob; 'look in at the window.'

'It 's boarded up,' said I.

'Well, what of that? Look in through the cracks.'

But as I drew myself up to the sill, and was preparing to peer in through the chink in the planks, there came stealing round the corner a short, thick set, gamekeeper sort of fellow, who seized me by the collar. Bob dropped in a moment. I confess I was rather startled.

'What are you two a-doing of here, a-spying about my 'ouse?' growled this worthy.

'Spy, yourself,' said I, 'who come sneaking round walls on tip-toe, but spies——'

'You keep a civil tongue in your head, young master, or maybe I'll make that jacket o' yourn fit you a little tighter. What 's your business at that winder, I arks?'

'Take down the board and clean it, and then we'll tell you,' says Bob.

'What did you see at that winder?' growled the man, tightening his grasp on my collar.

'Let go my coat, and I'll say,' returned I, though I expect my face plainly indicated my intention to run if he did.

'Come, let 's go, Leggings,' said Bob. 'Be a good fellow. We weren't doing any harm.'

But just at that moment the mysterious noise broke upon the air. Bob glanced at me, and the man noticed it.

'I'm not so sure of that,' answered he, looking irresolute. '"Twas some of you young warmints, as stole Squire's springes last year. No, you come along o' me, and we'll see what Mr. Rockleigh'll say to these goings on. Come, march.'

So saying, he caught hold of Bob, pushed us both before him to the front of the house, up a rickety flight of stairs, in at a door, and turned the key.

Bob sat down on the floor, with his hands round his legs and his nose between his knees, as I have somewhere seen the Prisoner of Chillon in a picture.

'Hulloh, Traff, we're in for a jolly shindy; by Jove, what'll the Doctor say?'

'After all, it's a lark, you know,' returned I, trying to look unconcerned. 'Let's make a row, and bring him up.'

So we kicked at the door, and howled until we heard him return.

'You'd best dry up, my jokers,' says he through the keyhole, 'or I shall have to make you. Just you take it easy, for I'm not a-going to let you go to-night, and the Squire'll have you to-morrow. So if you don't want larruping, you'd best dry up, as I says.'

'I say, Leggings, we'll give you a sovereign to let us go.' (We hadn't got one, I knew.)

'Come, let 's go,' says Bob.

'Let's see the colour of that same suvvering,' said the voice, and the key creaked in the lock. But the next moment the key creaked again, doubly locking the door.

'You'll have to stay here till to-morrow. Keep quiet; else I shall have to make yer.' With that he went down stairs again.

There was a kind of decision in his last words, which clenched the matter. We must make the best of it. After all, it would be a capital tale to tell; though why we were imprisoned we didn't exactly see. We were not at all apprehensive, and never for a moment doubted that we should be released on the following morning. Still we felt bound to make an effort to escape.

With this view, we began to survey our prison house. We were, as the reader knows, in an upper room of

this half-lodge, half-ruin—and this upper room was more ruin than lodge. The floor was strewn with quantities of dried fern; and, beyond a few staves and boards in the corner, there was not an atom of furniture. We tried the door; but that, as we knew, was securely fastened. One of the panels had sprung a little, leaving a widish cleft, through which we could see down the crazy stairs and open door into the little inclosure, where the evening shadows were lengthening over the grass; and in the inclosure our friend was strolling about with his hands plunged in the pockets of his velveteen jacket. Evidently we could not get out that way, even if we pushed out the panel, as Bob had thought to do. That was no go.

Then we tried the window. It was simply a long aperture, about four feet from the ground—more of a door than a window,—and across its wooden framework boards had been carefully nailed, so as to block it up completely, and shut out the light which, nevertheless, streamed in through cranny and crevice, and through several apertures in the masonry at the bottom of the frame, where the wall had apparently fallen away. Here it had been roughly mended by a pile of stones, and we hoped to move these, to creep through and drop, if we saw an opportunity. But here we were foiled again. When we had lifted down some of the smaller stones we came to an enormous block, which lay midwise resting against the frame. We might, perhaps, have lifted it if we could have got at it; but it was too high for us. We might have tilted it inwards,

but it would assuredly have broken through the rotten flooring. We might have pushed it through, but that would only bring our gaoler round to laugh at us. So we gave it up and lay down on the fern, with equal minds, and resigned ourselves to fate.

'I shall go to sleep,' says Bob. 'I say, Traff, tell us a tale, old flick, to send us to sleep.'

This was the constant call upon me in our dormitory, and in those days I never doubted that it was complimentary, though it was certainly quite the reverse.

'What'll you have? Simon Gossoon?'

'Anything,' says Bob; 'fire away.'

So I began: 'Simon Gossoon was the son of an apothecary at Berwick-upon-Tweed. Very early in life he acquired a liking for the sea, and determined to run——'

'Stop,' interrupted Bob, 'isn't that the chap who got wrecked on the Wokypoky Islands, painted himself like a harlequin, and married three wives with rings in their noses?'

'Yes, that's it,' said I.

'Oh, hang it; that's stale. Give us one of those that Sarah Zade tells.'

'All right,' whereupon I began *The story of Ahmed Hassan, the Tinker, and the Jew Abomilech*,[1] which, as far as I can remember, ran as follows:

'The Caliph Mulyezzin ruled over the wide district of Ragbagistan. Far as the eye can view is a convenient

[1] This is not included in the English edition of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

synonym for extent. But the eye that hoped to view the whole of the district of Ragbagistan must get up very early in the morning, and go to the top of a very high mountain, before it could take in even a portion of the caliph's kingdom.

'The Caliph Mulyezzin was excessively well connected. Besides being cousin of the sun and brother of the moon, he was on speaking terms with most of the planets, had an intimate acquaintanceship with Halley's comet, and was supposed to have cherished very tender feelings for the lost Pleiad.

'He was a just and a merciful monarch. True, it had been represented that he never spared a criminal, nor indeed was particular whether he were criminal or not. But in the words of the wise Bab-Oun-Abou, "The flies buzz lies, and the toad spitteth a slander."

'He was an amiable and a tender-hearted monarch. If, indeed, it be true that he would remain up all night to baste his roasting enemies with the acrid juice of the Gewallop Tree, this is only proof of the strictness of his code of justice. When the Sultana Saccharinah cast the eyes of the sheep at a handsome young soldier in her suite, it is indeed true that he caused those organs to be taken from her. But did he not replace them with the pupils inward, to enable her to see with convenience through the hinder part of her head. Verily, in the words of the sage, "The flies buzz lies and the toad spitteth a slander."

'And truly, his nature was soft and lamb-like.

Certainly he was subject to paroxysms of a terrible description, but, as these were hereditary, he was not to blame. When slightly opposed his beard would curl, his eyes would roll, and he would howl in a terrible voice for his executioner and his physician. The former would behead the offender, the latter would give his master a sedative, and there the matter ended. Let it be recorded that the caliph always expressed regret on these occasions. What says his historian, Bab-Oun-Abou: "We must judge the precept, not the practice of those high in office!"

'Now it happened that, in the 7th year of the reign of the Caliph Mulyezzin, there lived in the Tedyus-street, which ran along the shore of the Bubbling Water (where was also the summer palace of the caliph), a poor tinker (or what in that country corresponds to a tinker) named Ahmed Hassan.

'This Ahmed Hassan was a merry, shock-headed little fellow, who had to work very hard for a livelihood, and who lodged in a tiny box hung all round with the cages of parrots and the like, of which he was very fond. The little man had no family, nor indeed any leisure to think of marriage, yet he sang from morning till night to the ringing of his tools, and this was one of the songs he sang:

'I hammer and I clamor at pot and can and kettle,
I tinker up and clinker up all kinds of ware and metal;
All day I cry, come buy, come buy; look sharp and give
your order,
With my hoky, poky, tooral looral, bobachy, bahawder.

'I can be happy on a crust, I fear no dun or bailiff,
I am as rich as any Jew, and happy as a caliph,
For life's a mighty easy thing to hard work and soft sawder,
With my hoky, poky, tooral, looral, bobachy, bahawder.

'Now, exactly opposite the shop of Ahmed Hassan lived an ill-conditioned, gingerbread-coloured Jew, named Abomilech, who suffered greatly from the pain of an evil conscience and indigestion. Ostensibly he was a dealer in sour wines and curious toys, but in reality he was a money lender, and greatly patronized by the young fashionables of the court on the Bubbling Water.

'This happiness of his opposite neighbour greatly distressed and annoyed him, and he seemed beside to detect in the repeated song some allusion to himself. Moreover, as the tinker never failed to nod to him kindly, and offer him, in oriental fashion, the summit of the morning, the Jew at last grew so to hate the poor fellow that he went privily to the court and laid an information against him, charging him with concealing gold, found in the dominions of the caliph, and which of right belonged to the reigning prince——'

'Hush,' interrupted Bob, 'there it is again.'

'What?' said I.

'The noise; don't you hear it?'

I listened. 'I'm sure it 's only a wood-pigeon. There's a nest in some tree close by.'

'It sounds to me more like a sort of humming,' returned Bob doubtfully.

'Perhaps it's a bee,' for I confess I heard nothing very wonderful.

'A bee!' said Bob, with supreme contempt. 'Go on.'

I then continued my story.

'Now, it happened, curiously enough, that the poor tinker had a friend at court in the person of the caliph's confidential barber, Macassah, who came to him about nightfall to warn him of the intended visit of his master on the following day. The tinker was terribly alarmed. Macassah promised to accompany the caliph, with the view of helping his friend out of his difficulty, the precise nature of which had not been overheard by himself. But he warned the tinker on no account to contradict Mulyezzin, and above all to keep a sharp look out on the caliph's beard. "For," said the barber, clapping the tinker kindly on the shoulder, "when there is going to be a storm, there are always signs in the air."

'Next day came the caliph, accompanied by his barber and some of his household guard. I know not whether the barber had secretly mixed some cooling mixture with his shaving soap, but Mulyezzin was in high good humour.

' "Son of a dog," said he familiarly to the tinker, "bring out thy treasure."

'The tinker looked at the barber, the barber at the tinker. This was the idea, then, was it?

' "My lord," began the unfortunate creature, quaking with fear, "thy servant——." But detecting ever

so slight an agitation in the lower fringe of the caliph's beard, he continued—"Will it please your lordship to inspect my poor hut and little family?"

'"How, leprous slave," said the caliph, "hast thou a family in this bandbox?"

'"My lord," said the tinker, pointing to his cages, "here is my family—here my wife and children."

'Time was everything. As he said this, a sudden idea struck him. The caliph was horribly shy of magicians.

'"This," continued the tinker, pointing to a sour-looking parrot, "this is my wife."

'"How," quoth the caliph, "this parrot thy wife?"

'"My lord, she possessed the eloquence of the Enemy. She was an inexhaustible Fountain of Bitterness. This hut was too narrow for the clacking of her tongue, so I changed her into a bird."

'"And these," continued the caliph, pointing to the remaining cages, "are these also thine enemies?"

'"My lord the caliph," returned the tinker, "this is the wise man's maxim. Thine enemy is thine enemy, thy friend is thine enemy in disguise; therefore, beware of him. These are my *friends*, my lord the caliph."

'At this the caliph laughed heartily. He had forgotten all about the treasure.

'"Thou art a pleasant knave," quoth he. "See thou prepare to give me evidence of thy skill," and turned his rein to ride away.

'But it so happened that the Jew, Abomilech, had joined the crowd to rejoice in the tinker's downfall.

He was soon espied by the young officer of the guard who owed him monies.

'"My lord the caliph," interrupted this latter, "shall he not do so now? Behold, we have here an accursed Levite well suited for experiment."

'No sooner did Abomilech hear these words than he ran off at the top of his speed. The caliph turned again, and dispatched two horsemen to secure him, who soon brought him back nearly green with fear.

'The tinker, who had been rejoicing at the turn of affairs, blanched too.

'"Change me this Jew into a pig," said the caliph.

'Hardly had the command left his lips than the Jew uttered an unearthly yell, dropped between his captors, and lay, to all appearance, dead.

'And, for a moment, it seemed that he had indeed died of fright.

'"My lord the caliph, if the Jew is dead I cannot restore him to life, even to be a pig."

'The Jew, who was slowly reviving, heard this, and having his cue, lay stiller than ever.

'"Macassah," said the caliph, his beard curling ever so little, "thou art half chirurgeon: see if the carrion lives."

'The barber felt the Jew all over very carefully, taking as long as he could about it to gain time.

'"My lord, this is a strange case. Of a truth," said he, keeping his eye upon the terrible beard, "I think the dog be dead. But let me counsel your greatness to send for your Arab physicians."

'"Be it so," said the caliph. "Jaffeer, bid me here Al-Araroot and Al-Manyoc."

'Now, these Arab physicians were mere charlatans. The first healed the sick by the agency of the Great Blue Stone, the second by cabalistic figures and consultation of the stars. Neither ever referred to the patient himself, and both, as rival practitioners, hated each other.

'So, when they arrived, they hardly took any notice of the Jew.

'"My lord the caliph," said Al-Manyoc, "the unbelieving dog is dead!"

'"Dead, my lord the caliph," echoed Macassah, for this suited him.

'This was enough for Al-Araroot.

'"My lord," said he, "the Levite surely lives."

'"Lives, my lord the caliph," echoed the young officer; for, being young, he would rather the Jew were turned into a pig, although he owed him monies.

'"Now, by the beard of my grandmother," swore the caliph, and every hair curled with fury, "but this is passing strange."

'Meanwhile the quaking tinker——'

But, like the 'Story of Cambuscan bold', this one of the Jew and the tinker was never finished, for here Bob interrupted me with—

'Look, Traff, there's a glowworm.'

'Where, nonsense; it 's too early for glowworms.'

'Don't you see, there, in that corner?'

But when we tried to touch the apparent glowworm,

we found that although we moved the fern (it was growing rather darker) upon which we supposed him to be, his light remained in exactly the same place. It was no glowworm, but a little ray which shot up through a chink in the floor. We pulled away the layer of fern, and found that there was a tolerably long crack in the flooring, through which the light shot upward from below. We didn't take much time in falling flat and peeping through.

The plaster must have dropped from the ceiling underneath, for we could see quite plainly into the room under us. The light proceeded from a candle on the wall beneath, stuck in a rough wooden stand, and fenced with wire. This room was very much like ours, and, but for the candle, would have been quite dark. The floor was strewn with fern as ours was. Just below us, on a low kind of pallet, some six inches from the floor, was a figure, whether man or woman, did not at once appear, as at first it looked little more than a heap of clothes. Then it moved slightly, began rocking to and fro, and crooning softly to itself, to a low, monotonous kind of tune. It was the humming we had heard.

'Tsit,' said Bob.

The figure looked upward, and the light fell upon its face. It was the face of a young man, with tangled hair and a light beard, almost straw-coloured. The features were strangely worn and wasted, and there were dark rings round the eyes. They were blue, I think, but so light as to seem washed out and colourless.

They were quite without expression. On the feet was something that looked very much like worn out dress boots, and the trowsers, once black, were frayed into strips from the knees. The rest of the dress was a coarse kind of sacking.

It looked up steadily, attracted by the noise that Bob had made. Of course we were not visible. Then it turned, exactly like a monkey, and began scraping in the fern at the pallet's head.

I could hardly help laughing. 'What an ass he is,' I whispered.

'Shame,' said Bob, 'don't you see he's out of his mind.'

I had hardly thought it before. It struck me now—old Bob was far more sensible than I.

The next minute the figure had drawn from its hiding-place in the fern a long and roughly knotted tress of hair, not of human hair, surely, for it seemed far too coarse. Even in the uncertain light we could see that.

Over this it went through the most curious antics. Now it would stroke it softly, talking rapidly in what seemed to us to be French; now it would strike it roughly on the floor, muttering savagely; then again would hug it to its breast, to stroke, to talk, and sing to it again. Then, suddenly, it would fling the tress away, and crawl and strain to reach it, moaning very piteously, for it was fastened somehow in its place. We were only boys, and not particularly sensitive, but it was inexpressibly shocking to see the poor wretch so passionately

stirred by a mere horse's tail, for it was nothing else, and I was quite relieved to see the keeper enter presently with what seemed a coarse kind of porridge in a wooden bowl. The figure made a hasty movement, as if to hide the treasure in its breast.

The keeper laughed softly: 'You eat your supper, my man,' said he, pushing the bowl close to his prisoner's mouth, 'or I'll take your toy away.'

The creature made a motion of distaste. 'Eat,' said the man, 'or I'll——' The next moment he jerked out the horse-hair tress and tossed it far.

In a moment the blue eyes blazed, and the ragged creature rose to its full height, with clutching fingers seeking its tormentor's throat. Then, as if pulled backward suddenly (it was chained round the waist) it fell again with a clank, and cowered upon the floor. The keeper wrung its ear savagely, just as you punish a naughty child. It was terrible to see a tall man treated so. I heard Bob grind his teeth.

'Eat,' said the keeper, again.

But, with a sudden movement of its hand, the figure upset the dish.

'Well, if you won't have no supper, it ain't no fault of mine;' and the keeper picked up the wooden bowl and went away. The next moment we heard him creaking up the stairs.

'Sleep,' said Bob, turning quickly round upon his side. I was too nervous to do anything but hold my breath. Bob's rose and fell as if he was sound asleep.

The man softly opened the door, and looked in.

'Asleep,' he murmured; 'that's all right;' and we heard the key turn again in the lock.

There was silence for a few minutes.

'Traff,' said Bob, softly, 'we must get out of this.'

'Aye,' said I, ruefully, 'but how?'

Then we were quiet again. At last Bob got up and stepped like a cat to the door. He looked first through the cleft, then through the keyhole. In a moment he came back.

'Traff,' he whispered, 'stay quite still. Don't say a word, for he's sitting at the bottom of the stairs. *The fool's left the key in the door!*'

'Well, what good's that; it's on the other side?'

'You are thick-headed to-night. The door isn't tight to the floor. The wards are straight in the hole. Can't we push it out, man?'

Of course we could. I had not thought of that. We had done the like a hundred times before.

'Cut a long stiff piece of fern, and then we'll wait our chance.'

Patiently, very patiently, we watched at the cleft, waiting our chance. The keeper sat smoking at the bottom of the stairs, pipe after pipe. At last he rose. We must have waited nearly two hours. But then he kept pottering about the bottom of the stairs, putting things in order. He was evidently going to shut up the house.

At last he stepped out into the inclosure to shut the

outer gate. It was done in a minute. Bob poked out the key. Almost as it touched the ground, I hooked it in. When I held it in my hand, the keeper came back, put up a shutter, and stood leaning on the lintel, pulling the last whiffs of his pipe, and leisurely puffing out ring after ring of smoke. It was dreadful; we had the key, and still should be shut in.

'Bob,' I whispered—I don't know how it came into my head—'Bob, Bob, *let's push out the stone!*'

He saw in a minute. The keeper would run round at the crash, and leave the front door free. A second's whispering, and Bob was at the stone, and I held the key ready at the door.

Suddenly Bob turned, 'But the poor thing down there. It'll frighten him out of his wits.'

'But if we get out, Bob, perhaps *he'll* get out,' I suggested.

Bob nodded.

The next moment the very building rocked as if the wall fell out. There was a crash of splitting wood, a roar of tumbling, crumbling stone, and a great splash of water. I saw the figure drop its pipe, and dart round the corner, and in a second I was tearing away over the soft, green grass, and then through the ferns under the trees. About two hundred yards off I turned for Bob. No Bob. I was just going back, for I could not bear to leave him, when he plunged out of the thicket, wrapping his handkerchief round his arm.

'Hurt, old fellow?'

'Barked with a board; that's all! But shift your cud, mate, and cram all sail, for we must run now, and no mistake.'

And run we did, leaping the underwood, bursting through it, doubling like hares, until we came to the boundary wall. Along this we scudded for about a mile, fell into the high road, and a couple of hours afterwards were ushered into the Doctor's study, where he was waiting anxiously. You know no one knew where we were gone.

Of course we told him all. He said very little, beyond some murmured expression of disgust at the latter part of our story; said that as we had tried to return in time, he should not punish us, and begged us to answer no questions in the dormitory, to say we were tired, and to keep everything we had seen a profound secret.

Next morning, before we started home, we heard that the Doctor had ridden a long way on 'Brown Jerry', before breakfast. That was all. There is no more.

No more? No Postscript? You want to hear of the prisoner in the wood? Well, this is what the Doctor told me in '57, over a bottle of his 'particular'—port, this time. The man in the wood was Mr. Oliver Rockleigh, and this was his story. Exiled from home, and wandering idly through the south of France, he had fallen in love with a black-haired, winning, portionless little French girl, and had married her. His father, in

a fury, withdrew his allowance. For a time the pair struggled on; but life was not easy to the nerveless man in a country not his own, and with a delicately-nurtured wife. At last he yielded—being almost driven by want—to her proposal to go to Rockleigh Hall, and, if she could, to win over the fierce old squire. She was absolutely hunted from the door. And when Oliver, grown anxious, at last followed her, it was to learn that the poor girl, painfully making her way back to him, had died at a little village in Auvergne. Then followed a terrible altercation with his father; and, subsequently, his faculties gave way. It did not suit the secretiveness of the elder Rockleigh to confine him at Rockleigh Hall, and he had him removed to the solitary lodge in the wood, which had the reputation of being haunted and was, consequently, just suited for his purpose. When Dr. Rooke had visited the Hall, he managed, by threats of exposure and the like—and the good man must have fought a hard fight of it by his own account—to get Oliver removed to a first-rate asylum, where, under careful treatment, he rapidly recovered. Then the old Squire died.

The wind does not exactly howl through Rockleigh Hall, although it is uninhabited. Mr. Oliver Rockleigh, its present owner, lives abroad. When he was seen last year at Cannes, he had married again; and it is to be hoped that his present wife has consoled him for the loss of pretty, ill-fated Modeste Maréchale.

Bob, do you say? Dear old Bob! He has grown

from a fearless boy to a brave man. If you look through the *London Gazette* for November 1864, you will find in the despatch of the Commander-in-Chief on the China Station (Operations in the Straits of Simono-Seki), an account of the exploit of Lieutenant Robert Trevor of the *Mandragora* who, in company with an officer of the Dutch screw *Luipaard* landed at night, spiked all the guns of the Japanese battery No. 9,—'performing successfully hazardous voluntary duty, and thus rendering very valuable service'.

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